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THE ULTIMATE INTERVIEW

NOLAN DOES GRAVITY

How Interstellar put sci-fi back among the stars

DARK KNIGHT REBOOTED

GOTHAM LAID BARE

Star and showrunner on Arkham's most wanted

LIFTING THE MASK

ARROW RETURNS

Sidekicks spill all on Season 3

CAPTAIN'S LOG

KIRK VS THE WORLD

Shatner on the future of Star Trek

BATMAN V SUPERMAN

- INSIDERS REVEAL ALL ON DC'S LAST CHANCE
- FIRST LOOK AT THE JUSTICE LEAGUE MOVIE
- WHY AQUAMAN WILL KICK YOUR ASS

COSPLAY MADE EASY

Everything you need to know about looking fantastic

ALSO INSIDE

X-MEN: APOCALYPSE //
SLEEPY HOLLOW //
AMERICAN GODS //
FUTURAMA //
MAD MAX //



HAIL HYDRA!

Carter and Coulson team up for Agents Of SHIELD Season 2

QUEEN OF THE DAMNED

"TWILIGHT WAS ALL MY FAULT"

Anne Rice on copyists, influences and Lestat



HUGE ONE-ON-ONE

MARVEL GO KAWAII

Why Big Hero 6 is your new favourite movie



ROBIN REMEMBERED

PETER PAN'S MY DAD?

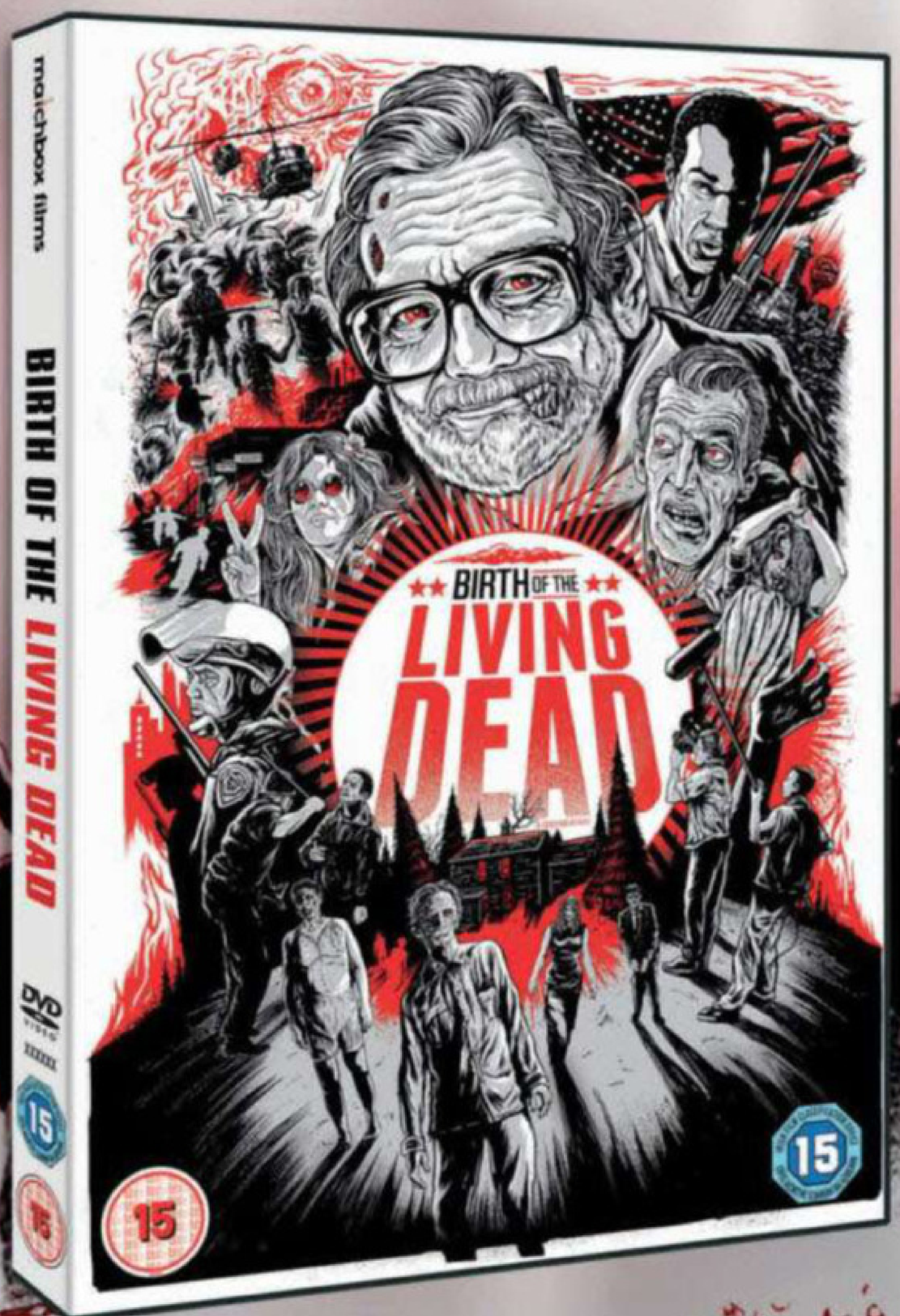
How Robin Williams beat Hook and stole our hearts

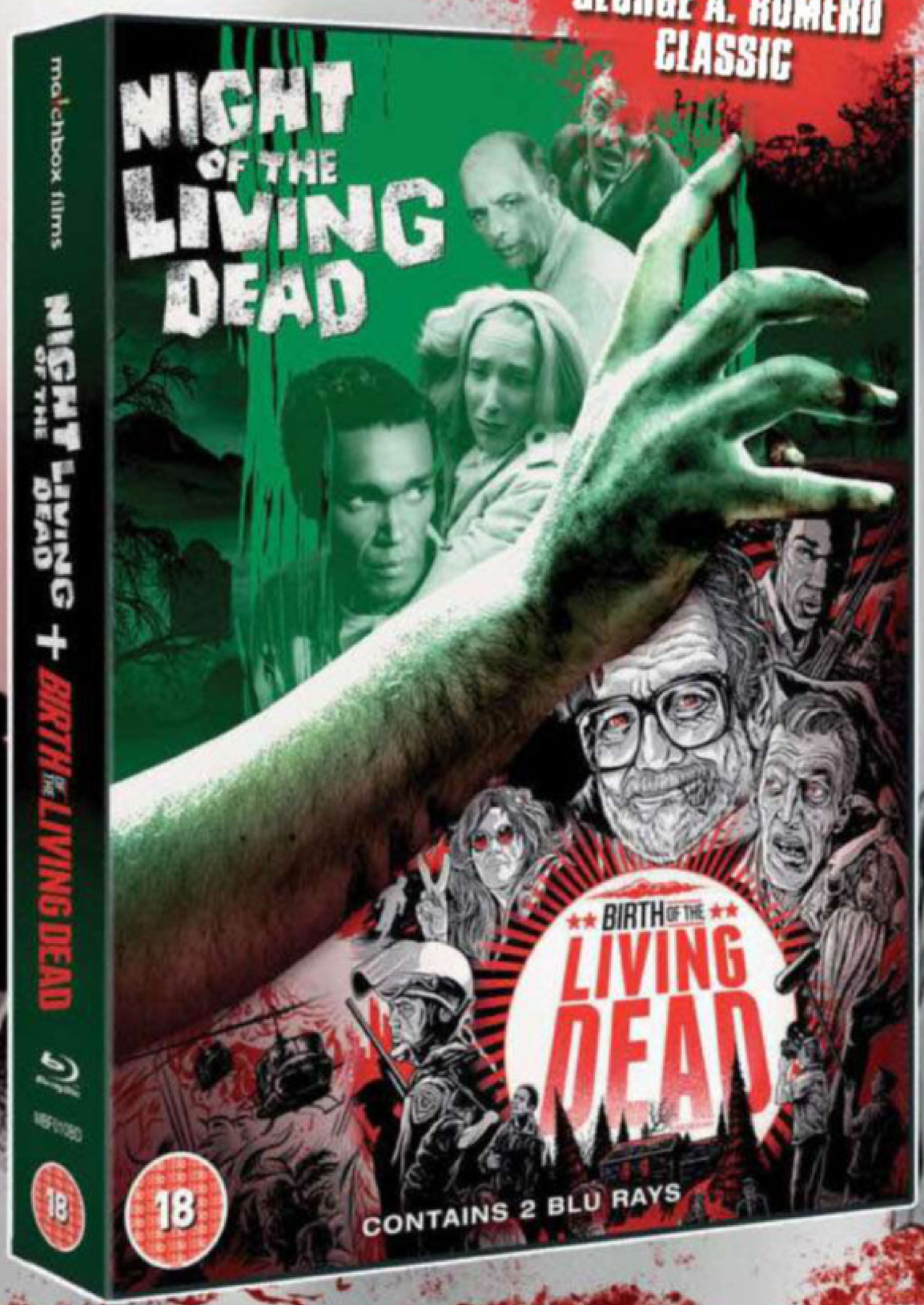
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"BIRTH OF THE LIVING DEAD IS A MUST WATCH FOR FANS OF THE WORK OF GEORGE A. ROMERO AND ZOMBIE FILMS IN GENERAL"

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DC fans need to get over it.

The road to Tim Burton's *Batman* was dogged by perceptions that he was the stretched lycra of the 1966 pop-art distraction, while Christopher Nolan's low-key and underperforming (but no less brilliant) *Batman Begins* was an apologetic attempt to waft away the Bat-nipples of Joel Schumacher.

Michael Uslan, the executive producer of every *Batman* film since 1989, writes as the fanboy wronged in his autobiography *The Boy Who Loved Batman*, where he rages against the 'KAPOW!' headlines that greet every incarnation of the Dark Knight. Uslan's sense of injustice drove him to realise a darker take on the character that echoed the character's Seventies rebirth under creators O'Neil and Adams, while Goyer and Nolan clutched Alan Moore and Brian Bolland's *The Killing Joke* and Frank Miller's definitive Bat-books, The *Dark Knight Returns* and *Year One*, to their chests like rosaries to ward off evil spirits.

Superheroes are cool now – Tim Burton proved it, and Christopher Nolan jogged our memories. But the preoccupation with making Aquaman 'badass' is symptomatic of that old demon shame squirming away in the belly of the fan like an alien parasite.

All superheroes sound stupid; they defy logic and sense, but the real secret of Marvel's success is making a virtue of it – talking raccoons, friendly tree monsters and all.

Perhaps the biggest challenge for *Batman V Superman* isn't how to make Aquaman badass; it's how to give audiences a vision of DC's future that isn't a series of apologies for *Green Lantern*.



James Hoare
Editor in Chief

GET EXCITED ABOUT BIRDMAN

Perhaps more magical realism than out-and-out SFF, wonderful indie comedy *Birdman* (or *The Unexpected Virtue Of Ignorance*) looks like the first great film of 2015. Sublime meta-casting abounds as Michael Keaton plays Riggan Thomson, a struggling actor best known as the superhero Birdman trying to escape his legacy (which seems to consist mainly of going "Ka-kaaaw!"), with support from the late great Gwen Stacy (Emma Stone) and one-time Bruce Banner (Edward Norton).

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CONTENTS

EVERY ISSUE

06 PORTAL
What's happening in the world of sci-fi

82 SUBSCRIPTIONS
Subscribe to the magazine and save today

130 NEXT ISSUE
Your first look at the next issue of SciFiNow



42 INTERSTELLAR
Nolan and Thomas on 2014's space odyssey
INTERVIEWS



38 AGENTS OF SHIELD
Coulson and Skye speak
PREVIEW



52 GOTHAM
Creator on Penguin, Riddler and more



06 BIG HERO 6
Your new favourite movie



50 THE BABADOOK
The year's scariest film?



15 WILLIAM SHATNER
Kirk reveals all



114 HOOK



32 COSPLAY 101

PORTAL

06 Big Hero 6
We get the lowdown on Disney's brand new Marvel-inspired animation.

08 Sleepy Hollow
Why no one is safe in Season Two.

11 Gods Of Egypt
Rising star Brenton Thwaites discusses his role in the latest film from the creator of *The Crow* and *Dark City*.

15 William Shatner
Captain Kirk himself talks about the impact *Star Trek* has had on his life.

FEATURES

18 Batman V Superman
With DC's deathmatch edging closer, we look at how the superhero movie has changed.

26 Arrow
The stars of The CW's hit series look ahead to Season Three.

32 Cosplay Tips
With superhero dress-up more popular than ever, we present our complete guide to cosplay.

38 Agents Of SHIELD
Clark Gregg and the cast of Marvel's flagship series on how they turned things around for Season Two.

42 Interstellar
We journey into beyond with the writing team behind Christopher Nolan's Kubrick-echoing spacefarer.

50 The Babadook
Fresh from FrightFest, actress Essie Davis talks to us about starring in the most terrifying movie of the year.

52 Gotham
Producer Bruno Heller and young Bruce Wayne David Mazouz tell all on the Dark Knight's future rogue's gallery.

60 Anne Rice
The *Interview With The Vampire* author gives her thoughts on the vampire movie today and her latest Lestat-starring novel.

REVIEWS

66 Dracula Untold
Can Luke Evans breathe life into the old Count in this new take on the legend?

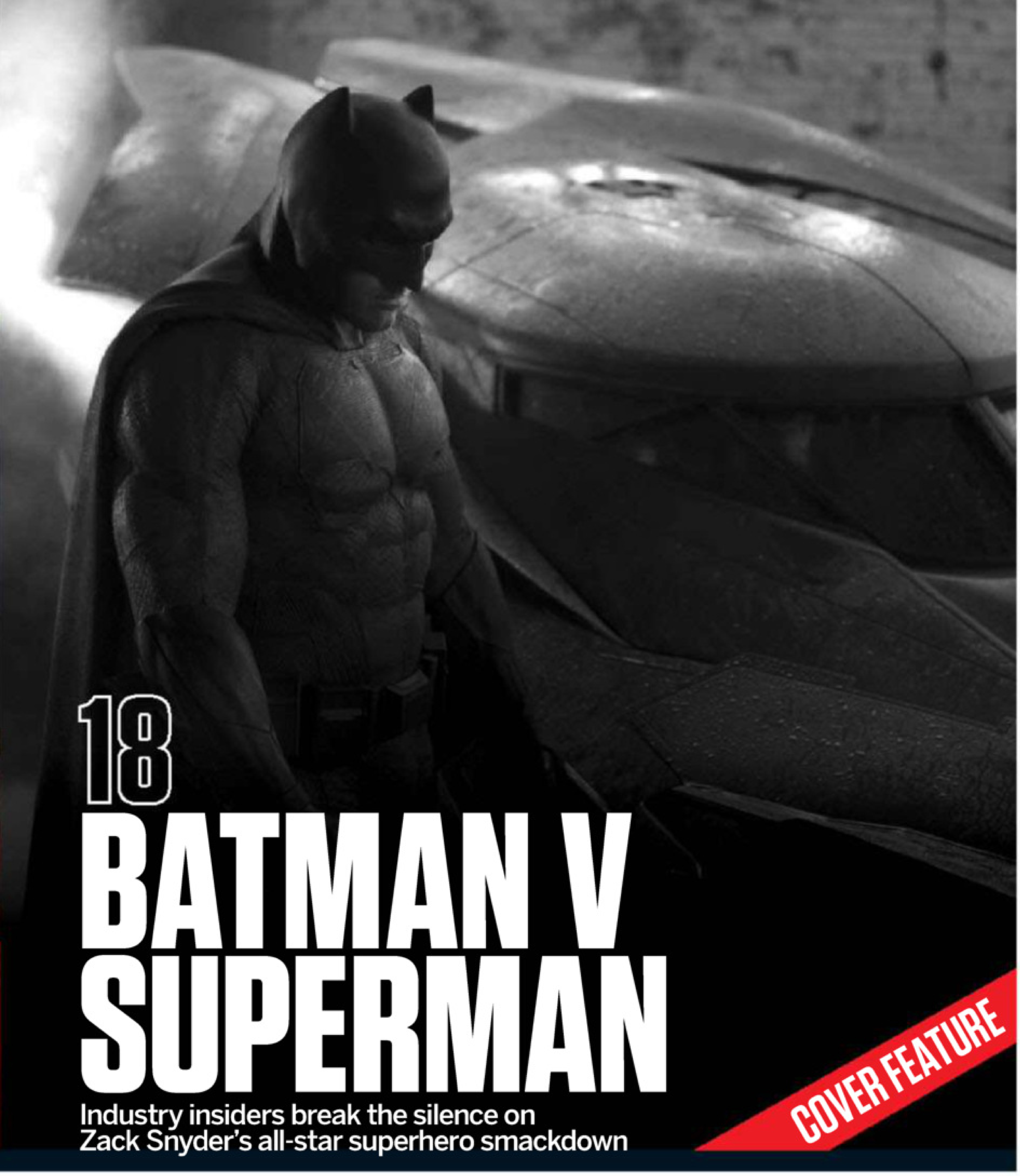
67 Life After Beth
Dane DeHaan and Aubrey Plaza take their love beyond the grave.

67 The Babadook
Jennifer Kent's debut got all the festival buzz, but is it deserved?

68 I Origins
Does Mike Cahill's latest feature reach the creative heights of *Another Earth*?

68 Luna
We check out the latest from the director of *MirrorMask*.

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18 BATMAN V SUPERMAN

Industry insiders break the silence on Zack Snyder's all-star superhero smackdown

COVER FEATURE

69 The Boxtrolls
Stop-motion titans Laika go underground – but is this box-office fresh?

70 Godzilla
Does Toho's favourite monster still tear up the screen in the comfort of your living room?

72 The Cabinet Of Dr Caligari
One of the most influential horror films of all time creeps onto Blu-ray.

76 American Horror Story: Coven
Find out if the third iteration of Ryan Murphy's anthology horror series left us bewitched.

76 Agents Of SHIELD
Catch up with Coulson and co as we document the highs and lows of the first season.

BOOK CLUB

86 Essential Read: The Time Machine
How HG Wells gave form to one of the most enduring tropes of science fiction.

90 Beginner's Guide: Douglas Adams
All you need to know about the life, universe and everything of sci-fi's funniest writer.

92 The Abyss Beyond Dreams
Does Peter F Hamilton's prequel to his acclaimed *Void* trilogy match up to his best work?

100 Neil Gaiman
The genre icon talks children's fiction and working with Bryan Fuller on *American Gods*.

TIMEWARP

106 Jess Franco
Our complete guide to one of the most prolific filmmakers of all time.

114 Hook
We return to Neverland to reminisce about Robin Williams and one of his most fondly remembered films.

118 Richard Kiel
The legendary Bond villain Jaws discusses his career in one of his last interviews.

120 The Fog
John Carpenter on how he made a horror classic on a shoestring budget.



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MEET THE TEAM

Q. Which two superheroes would you like to see do battle?



James Hoare
Editor in Chief
A. Iron Man v Punisher
Let's see how smug Tony is with an anti-tank mine clamped to him.



Jonathan Hatfull
Senior Staff Writer
A. John Constantine v Loki
Because they're both devious tricksters.



Poppy-Jay Palmer
Staff Writer
A. Spider-Man v Black Widow
The ultimate battle of the arachnids.



Steve Wright
Production Editor
A. Superman v Hulk
Not sure how much luck Hulk will have smashing the Man of Steel.



Marcus Faint
Senior Designer
A. Rorschach v Daredevil
The mask wouldn't put off Mr Murdock.



PORTAL

Your essential, trustworthy and unrivalled guide to the latest genre happenings



> "IT'S FILLED WITH TEARS, SURPRISES, THRILLS AND LAUGHTER"
> ROY CONLI

010 THE HOBBIT



We check out what's to come in The Battle Of The Five Armies

013 X-MEN: APOCALYPSE



Josh Helman teases more from William Stryker

014 ZOMBEAVERS



The cast on why this is the year's guilty pleasure

BIG HEROES

BIG HERO 6 BLASTS OFF

How Marvel and Disney combined to create the year's biggest animated movie

WORDS JONATHAN HATFULL

It was really only a matter of time. As soon as Disney bought Marvel, we wondered when we'd get to feast our eyes on an animated Marvel movie, and the answer is "Now."

When we sit down with the film's producer Roy Conli, he explains that the studios were meant for each other. "There's something about Marvel that's really enchanting," he enthuses. "The great thing is that they always make very aspirational films, and I think we do the same. I always think that there's an inclusionary aspect with Marvel, and the same thing with Disney animation. I think we probably try and expand the inclusion a little bit, but yeah, the acquisition of Marvel was absolutely a smart move on Disney's part, because I think they do kind of live in a big kind of similar universe."

'Enchanting' and 'aspirational' are definitely two adjectives that can be applied to *Big Hero 6*. It's the story of Hiro, a teenager struggling to cope with the death of his older brother Tadashi. One day, he finds Baymax, a medical service 'bot that Tadashi was working on, and he strikes upon the idea that they can put things right.

If you've never heard of Hiro, Baymax or Big Hero 6 at all, don't worry: it's not just you. Conli tells us that Disney deliberately set out to find a comic that they could play around with. "Going with a lesser-known project from Marvel was better because this was going to be always a Disney animated film," he explains. "We certainly couldn't grab any of the properties that are being filmed now, and finding something that was really off to the side gave us complete freedom. The original comic-book takes place in Tokyo, we've made it San Fransokyo. By having that freedom we were able to create a world and characters."

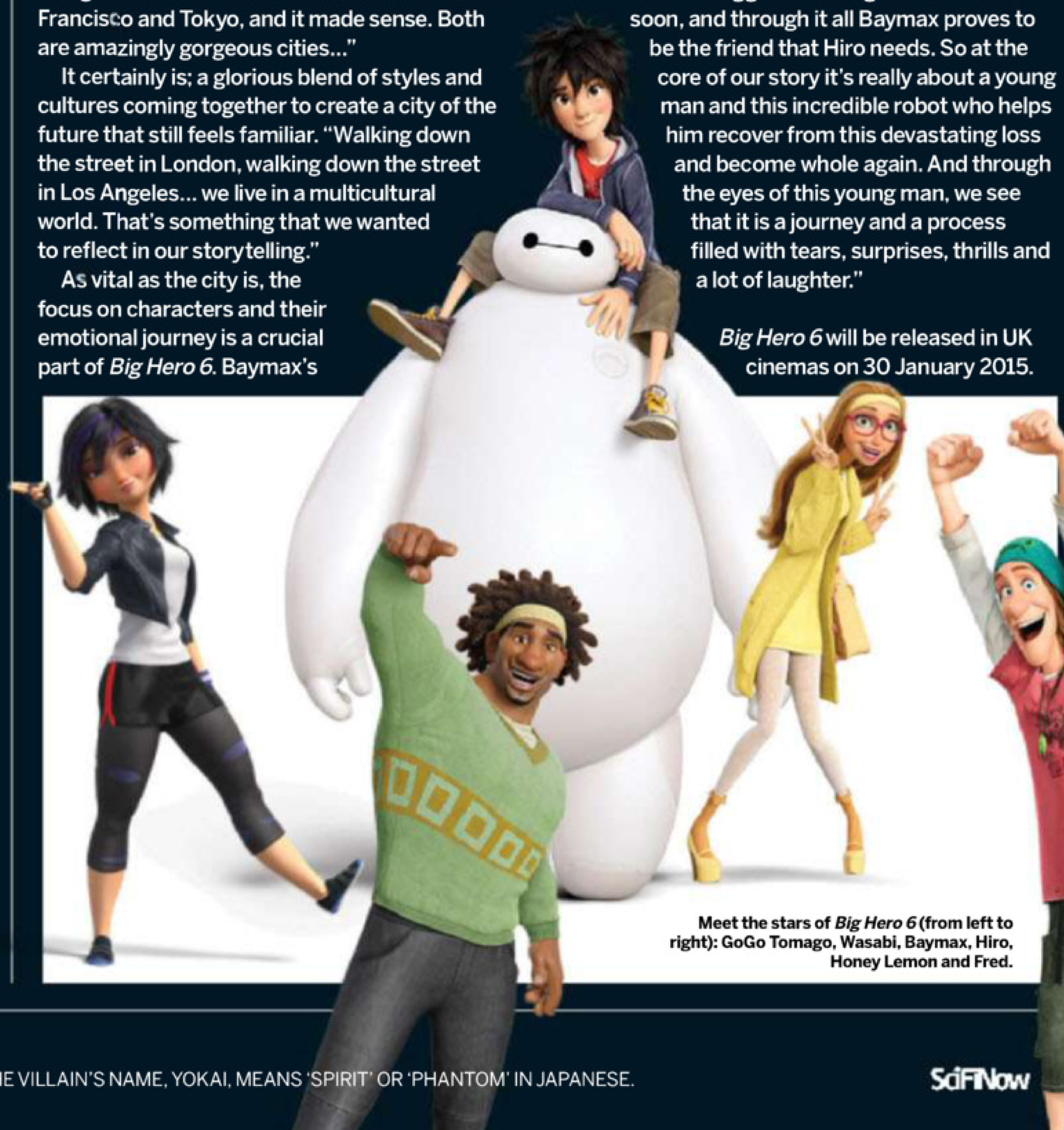
San Fransokyo. The blend between one of the US's most beautiful cities and Japan's stunning capital has resulted in something that looks truly extraordinary. "There are three tenets with which we work in terms of telling stories," Conli tells us. "The first is 'Build a world where people want to be.' You build a world that is exciting, then you build characters who you absolutely fall in love with, and then you tell a story using those characters that's really compelling. So the world was the number one thing that we started exploring, and Don [Hall, co-director] had lots of explorations in terms of 'Where do we set this?' He looked at New York and he thought, 'Well, that's kind of the Marvel universe, and we don't really want to go there.' Then San Francisco being one of his favourite cities, he looked at San Francisco and Tokyo, and it made sense. Both are amazingly gorgeous cities..."

It certainly is; a glorious blend of styles and cultures coming together to create a city of the future that still feels familiar. "Walking down the street in London, walking down the street in Los Angeles... we live in a multicultural world. That's something that we wanted to reflect in our storytelling."

As vital as the city is, the focus on characters and their emotional journey is a crucial part of *Big Hero 6*. Baymax's programming as a healthcare 'bot makes him dedicated to helping Hiro however he can, and the relationship between the two is a touching blend of a child and his pet, and eventually a fraternal one.

"The brother relationship is a very special relationship; I have two of them," grins Conli. "They can be pains, and they can be your greatest defender. Hiro and Baymax will basically encounter the biggest challenges of their lives soon, and through it all Baymax proves to be the friend that Hiro needs. So at the core of our story it's really about a young man and this incredible robot who helps him recover from this devastating loss and become whole again. And through the eyes of this young man, we see that it is a journey and a process filled with tears, surprises, thrills and a lot of laughter."

Big Hero 6 will be released in UK cinemas on 30 January 2015.



Meet the stars of *Big Hero 6* (from left to right): GoGo Tomago, Wasabi, Baymax, Hiro, Honey Lemon and Fred.

TRIVIA THE VILLAIN'S NAME, YOKAI, MEANS 'SPIRIT' OR 'PHANTOM' IN JAPANESE.



APOCALYPSE NOW

SLEEPY HOLLOW: “EVERYBODY’S IN HELL”

Orlando Jones on why things won’t be easy for Ichabod

WORDS JONATHAN HATFULL

The first season of *Sleepy Hollow* ended on a cliffhanger. Now that it’s back, Orlando Jones, who plays Captain Frank Irving, tells us that things won’t be getting any easier.

“We don’t do the big cheat and jump to everything being fine,” he assures us. “Everybody’s in their own version of Hell, and now we’re back in Hell! The second horseman of the apocalypse is here; there are now two very powerful forces of evil on the ground, and that is changing and throwing curveballs at us at every turn! War is very much raging.”

Frank found himself under arrest after confessing to the crimes his daughter committed while possessed. ‘Hell’ is a good word for it.

“The story with Frank is going to be similar to last season; kind of a slow burn to getting crazier as the season goes. He really is a guy that felt like he made the right decisions, and life has just sort of got him like a rag doll. It’s fun to play that, because I often feel like that hopelessness is what he battles against on a daily basis.”

Jones also reveals that we shouldn’t hold our breath waiting for Frank and Jenny (Lyndie Greenwood) to push their relationship any further. “I love the fact that the writers made it a complicated and messy. A lot of other shows would have went, ‘Oh, let’s explore some romance!’ And they’re not really in that place. It’s the scenes we laugh at in blockbuster movies where people are kissing when the world is ending and you’re like ‘Stop kissing and go save the world!’”

Sleepy Hollow: Season Two is airing now on Wednesdays at 9pm on the Universal Channel.



STAR WARS REVISITED

THE EXPANDED UNIVERSE STRIKES BACK

Star Wars: Tarkin author James Luceno on life inside the new order

WORDS JAMES HOARE

As the second of the new ‘fully canon’ *Star Wars* books, *Tarkin* is under a lot of scrutiny from fans. Author James Luceno spills the beans on the book’s link to *Star Wars: Rebels*, the secrecy surrounding the new movie, and what the death of the Expanded Universe really means...

NOBODY KNOWS ANYTHING ABOUT EPISODE VII

“Right now, I know nothing. I think that’s what the Story Group has been created to contain. Without spilling secrets they can say, ‘I think this isn’t a good place to go with this book’ or ‘You might want to steer clear of this topic.’”

STAR WARS: TARKIN IS AN ORIGIN STORY

“What makes Tarkin fascinating is you don’t have to deal with the Force. You’re dealing with the psychology or commitment to an Imperial philosophy that in itself is evil from many points of view. I struggled with trying to find that line between the monster and the human within.

“The novel is kind of an origin tale for Tarkin. It’s set five years after Palpatine declares himself Emperor, so things are still moving towards the darker elements of that period leading up to *A New Hope*.”

TARKIN TIES IN WITH STAR WARS: REBELS

“I came in with a number of ideas of where I wanted to go with the story, and those were generally discussed – some of them in relation to what’s coming with *Rebels*. I read the series bible, I see where they’re going in the first season, and I have a sense of where they’re going to go through the seasons that follow.”

THE FORCE UNLEASHED HAS BEEN RETCONNED

“We’re going to lead up to *A New Hope* in a way that may contradict some of the stories that have been told, mostly in *The Force Unleashed* and books that came out around that videogame.”

THE EXPANDED UNIVERSE EXISTS... FOR NOW

“I chose not to reference too much EU material because of the setting of the story, but it was still there. I think going forward what may happen is you may see writers writing around some of that older material that’s now classified as ‘Legends’ – writing around it rather than trying to overwrite it.”

THE CANON REBOOT COULD DO MORE HARM THAN GOOD

“There’s some logic from a marketing point of view, but I worry about alienating fans and readers, because it’s a large group and they’re very loyal.”



Star Wars: Tarkin is available to buy from 6 November.

FIVE THINGS WITH

DAVID X COHEN

The creator of Futurama talks Star Trek, how The Simpsons changed everything and why he's part of a secret plot to educate America

WORDS **JONATHAN HATFULL**

> "EVERYBODY EXPLODED OUT OF THERE LIKE A CLOWN CAR!"

1 Conspiracy theory

David X Cohen is best known to genre fans as the co-creator of *Futurama*, but you might not know that he's also part of a conspiracy to secretly place maths and science problems into animation. "The word 'conspiracy' may be a bit of an exaggeration considering that when we started it we had no plan at all," laughs Cohen. "We started sticking these math jokes in the background of *The Simpsons* because there were empty spaces and we thought, 'That looks kind of boring back there.' I was a math guy, and I would stick some equation back there and think, 'Oh, my roommate will appreciate it', and we didn't really think much more about it. It didn't start out as a conspiracy, but thanks to the fans it turned into a cooperative conspiracy."

2 Speak to the fans

Cohen's talent for creating a show that forms a connection with its audience was perfected on *Futurama*, but it was honed on *The Simpsons*. "If you write a joke and only 100 people out of 10 million appreciate it, you've created 100 lifetime fans at that point, because people say, 'I can't believe you put a joke in about this obscure physics equation that only I will get!'" he explains. "So each time you get 100 people and it starts to add up eventually. Fans saved [*Futurama*] first by watching us in the middle of the night and then by buying those DVD movies, so twice my neck has been saved by the fans!"

3 Where no show had gone before

Futurama set a high benchmark for sci-fi comedy, but Cohen tells us he and Matt Groening struggled to find the right blend. "I was worried at first, because I thought, 'If you really go for it with the science fiction, how are we going to make it funny?' That turned out not to be a problem," Cohen tells us. Those of us who struggle to make it through 'Jurassic Bark' without bursting into tears will know that this applies to the emotional episodes too. "You think 'Well, this is a comedy show, we don't want to have people dying and sobbing hysterically.' Fan feedback showed us that we did not need to be concerned with that."

4 Stars in their eyes

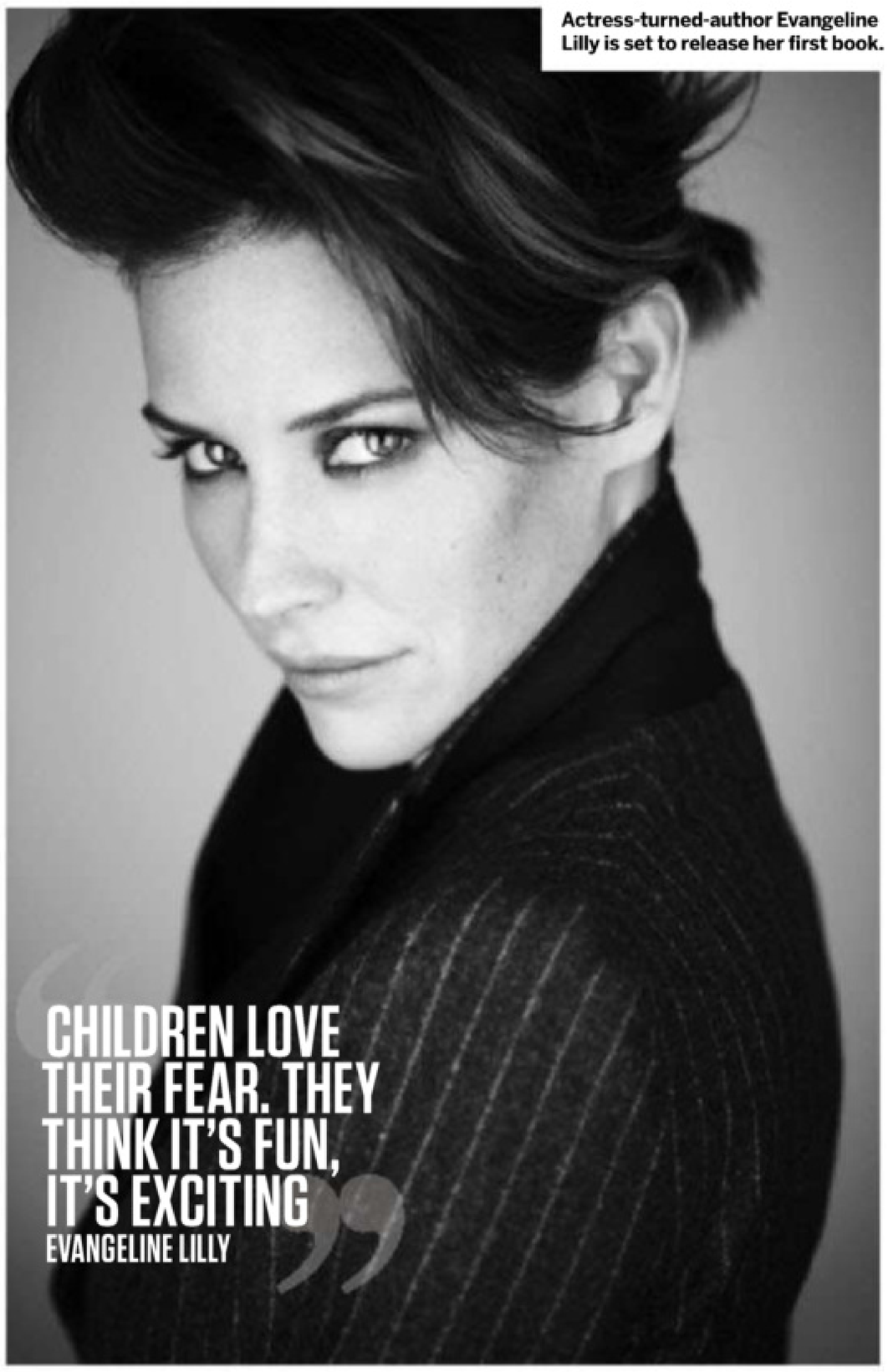
The nerd culture homaging of *Futurama* reached its zenith with the episode 'Where No Fan Has Gone Before', which features almost the entire original cast of *Star Trek*. "That was one of the high points of working on the show... because that's always been probably the biggest inspiration to me," remembers Cohen. "We actually had William Shatner and Leonard Nimoy in the recording studio at the same time, but we didn't want to terrify the two of them by having this giant crowd staring at them while they were recording their lines, so all of our writing staff hid out in the sound engineer's booth. The second they finished, the door burst open and everybody exploded out of there like a clown car!"

5 All hail Matt Groening

Given the quality of animated shows currently swarming TV, it's important to remember just how much all of them owe to Matt Groening and *The Simpsons*. "The big change in animation in our lifetime is *The Simpsons*," says Cohen. "It changed everybody's thinking about what a television cartoon was. Matt Groening comes along with *The Simpsons* – initially these little shorts that were on HBO, and then with the series on the Fox network, and changed everybody's idea that a cartoon had to be a thing for little kids. So many shows have followed in the wake of that."



The Simpsons And Their Mathematical Secrets by Simon Singh is available now, published by Bloomsbury.



Actress-turned-author Evangeline Lilly is set to release her first book.

TAURIEL TURNS CHILDREN'S AUTHOR



The Hobbit and Lost star Evangeline Lilly talks parenting, made-up words and being scared

WORDS **POPPY-JAY PALMER**

Her character Tauriel was created especially for *The Hobbit* film universe, but now Evangeline Lilly is creating characters of her own.

Her new children's book, *The Squickerwonkers*, is a dark but colourful tale about a spoilt little girl called Selma who stumbles upon a band of marionettes and gets a little more than she bargained for. The story has been in Lilly's head since she was 14.

"I was a big fan of Dr Seuss back then, and I just loved the way he had such an irreverent approach to language," she says. "He would make words up and do whatever he wanted whenever he wanted. When I was a kid I was like, 'I want to do that! That's so cool. I want to make up my own words and make up my own world!' And so that's what I did. I was just sitting in my bedroom one day bored and made up this story about these characters called the Squickerwonkers. I just liked the way the word felt on my mouth."

After working on large-scale projects like *Lost* and *The Hobbit*, Lilly has spent lots of time in other people's universes. Being able to develop her own was a nice break. "I've been back in front of the camera because I'm shooting *Ant-Man* right now after having spent the last two years focused entirely on the book and the series," she tells us. "I've realised just how much more I love and adore creating my own world as opposed to just being a piece of somebody else's."

The book is a *Hobbit* collaboration of sorts, with Weta Workshop artist Johnny

THE END OF THE ROAD

Take a closer look at The Battle Of The Five Armies



The road to Isengard
Saruman's lurking in the shadows, looking shifty. There's a good chance we'll see his transition from rad to bad.

Elf class
The daggers are out, which will hopefully result in another awesome Legolas/Tauriel fight scene, with the pair as Lord and Lady Badass.

Into the fire
The Hobbit 3 will likely jump right in with a fire battle to the death. Bard is out of jail and getting ready to score himself a dragon-hide overnight bag.

White Council down
Gandalf and Galadriel are the rock stars of Middle-Earth, but the impending battle seems too much. We know they won't die, though things might get painful.

Shame of thrones
Life has been hard on Thorin, and he's looking weary on the throne of Erebor. Perhaps the Arkenstone will corrupt him much like Bilbo with the ring.

The fall collection
A troubled Thranduil leads the Mirkwood elves into battle atop a magnificent war moose. But we all know Elf battles mean one thing: fabulous Elven armour in 48 fps!



Fraser-Allen's illustrations bringing the Squickerwonkers to life.

"With the character creation, Johnny was such a natural," says Lilly. "He would just create something that was ten times more creative and interesting than what I had told him!"

Lilly has always been a fan of darker, more edgy stories, and she thinks kids love them too. "Kids have a very different relationship with fear than we as adults do. They're taught what to fear. I've noticed as a mother that if I don't teach my son what's scary and what isn't, his reactions to things teach me a lot about my programming. I read *The Squickerwonkers* to him and he loved it. He thinks it's absolutely hilarious! He has no concept of the fear in the book. I think we have to be careful as parents not to project our own fear onto our children."

"I think children love their fear. They think it's fun, it's an exciting emotion, it's equally as exciting as feeling happy or blissful or thrilled, it's exciting. It's just another emotion where they go, 'Oh! That feels... what is *that*?' And they don't know what they are feeling, because emotions are still brand new.

"All emotions are equally valid, and it's children who should teach us about how beautiful what we would ordinarily call a negative emotion can be."



The Squickerwonkers, published by Titan Books, will be released on 5 December. It is the first of an 18-part series.

Family values
Thorin, Fili and Kili look more majestic than ever. They are on the warpath, dead set on slaughtering everything in their way.



Backin' the hobbit
Bilbo is gearing up to face the biggest battle of his life. Is the ring's hold on him and his newfound courage enough to help him through?

CLASH OF THE TITANS... IN EGYPT?

Star Brenton Thwaites spills all on the sword-and-sandals epic from The Crow director

WORDS **OLIVER PFEIFFER**



Rising Aussie actor Brenton Thwaites has already come a long way since *Home And Away*. Since then, he has added a clutch of high-profile genre titles to his credentials, including playing a prince who does battle with a fearsome Angelina Jolie in the Disney fantasy-adventure flick *Maleficent* and going head-to-head with Jeff Bridges by headlining Phillip Noyce's futuristic sci-fi drama *The Giver*.

His recently completed lead performance in Alex Proyas's star-studded fantasy epic *Gods Of Egypt*, could be his most challenging yet. "The character I play in *Gods Of Egypt* is something I've never done before," he reveals, "He's a street boy, kind of like Aladdin. He's in love with a girl and lives a very simple life in a world where mortals co-exist with gods. When that is taken from him he decides to try and fight to get it back and teams up with a God, Horus, who is played by Nikolaj Coster-Waldau. So they have a weird relationship where they both rely upon each other to save ancient Egypt."

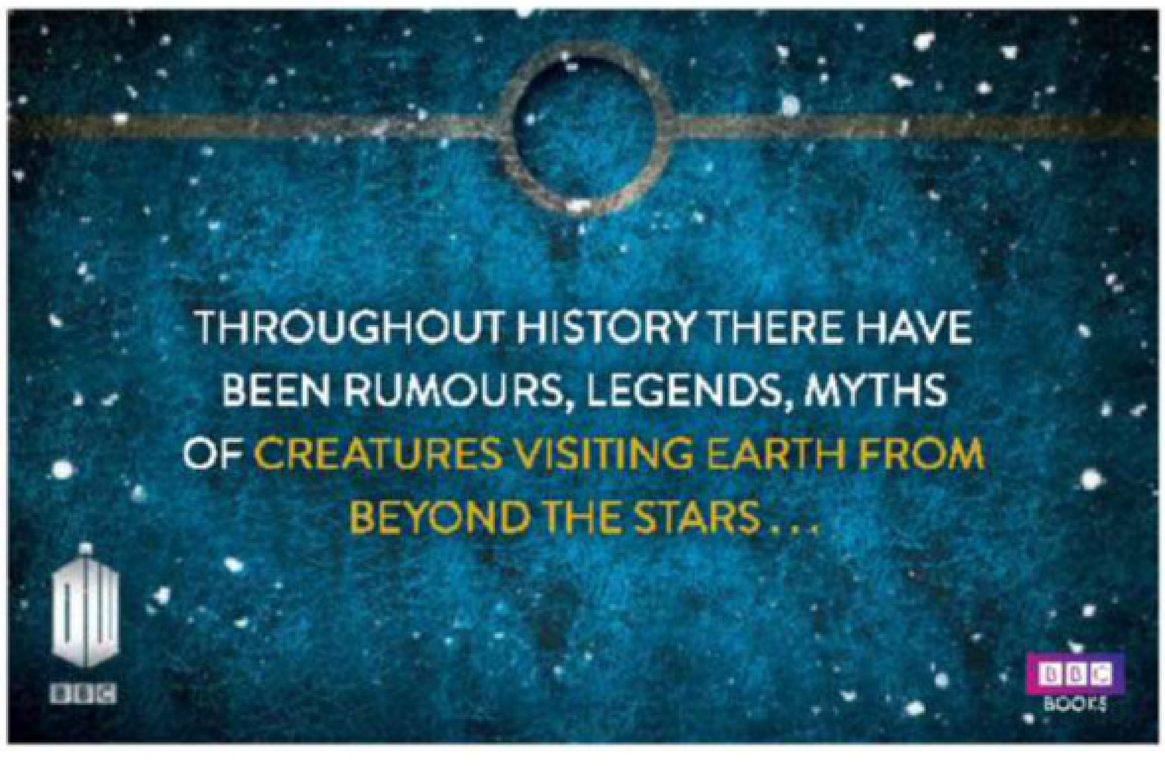
Acting opposite the *Game Of Thrones* star certainly washed off on the young actor. "Nikolaj is great. He's so fun and very intelligent, and I have to say he's probably one of the most professional I've ever worked with in terms of knowing the material back to front, keeping fit, working over hours and saying 'yes' to everything, so he was a good example for me to follow."

Jolie, Bridges and more recently Ewan McGregor –Thwaites has already worked alongside some impressively prolific A-listers, including Oscar-winning compatriot Geoffrey Rush. "He was someone I dreamed of working with since I was a kid, and it was great to see him work. His voice is so strong, and he didn't do much, but still remained very powerful," he says. "I have one scene with Geoffrey in *Gods Of Egypt*, but maybe more will be created in the CGI part of it. "

But ultimately, it was the credentials of director Proyas that sealed the deal. "I love Alex's films, and his ideas are very otherworldly," enthuses the actor. "I'd done [William Eubank's sci-fi thriller] *The Signal*, and I'd just finished *The Giver*, which were very otherworldly, but this one was a chance to completely immerse myself in fantasy and adventure. When I read the script it was fun, and I thought this was a way to connect with audiences.

"It's like *300*, because Gerard Butler is in a pair of knickers swinging a sword in this one too," he laughs.

Gods Of Egypt will be released in cinemas on 12 February 2016.



Just how geeky are our favourite sci-fi stars?

GEEK-O-METER

JOHN BARROWMAN

91 TOTAL GEEK RATING

GEEK CRED

John Barrowman is best known as *Torchwood*'s Captain Jack Harkness, but he can currently be found in Starling City as villain Malcolm Merlyn in *Arrow*. But is he as bad as he appears? "He was doing exactly the same thing as Oliver, but going about it in a different way. Oliver would target one person, but Malcolm – to get to that one person it didn't matter if he killed 50. I don't see him as a bad guy; I see him as a good guy who's doing things the wrong way."

19/20

GEEK KNOWLEDGE

When it comes to sci-fi shows, Barrowman has more or less seen them all. His childhood viewing habits largely included the likes of *Battlestar Galactica*, *Buck Rogers In The 25th Century*, *Thunderbirds* and *Doctor Who* ("Obviously!"). "I've grown up watching this stuff, and to be part of it… it's my dream job." He is also a fan of comic-book covers, and owns a collection of original Stan Lee artwork. "As an adult, I know Stan Lee, which is really kind of weird to say. This is bizarre!"

19/20

COMMITMENT

He has been upped from a recurring character to a regular for *Arrow*'s third season, and he couldn't be happier. "I've always said when you are part of a TV series and you're a regular, you're part of a family," he enthuses. He hasn't been part of a big ensemble since *Torchwood* in 2011. "You're all there to create this great show together… I'm so lucky. All the shows that I've been in, everybody has worked together smashingly well. It's really nice to be a part of that again."

15/20

FAN POWER

Barrowman is known among fans for being a seasoned convention veteran. His photo ops have popped up online over the years,with fans lifting Barrowman, Barrowman lifting fans, Barrowman grabbing fans' bums and vice versa. "People know that when I go to conventions I'm like everybody else. I'm enjoying it, and what's really great is they allow me to do it. They don't bombard me. They might say 'hi', but they know I like to do it, so they let me do it."

18/20

COSPLAY CULT

The actor is constantly meeting fans dressed as his aliases, but he'd like to try cosplaying a superhero. "Maybe I'd do a Captain America… I'd do the new style, but I'd also go retro." Full helmet, shield, the works? "Yeah, well, you don't do it half-assed! I also liked Aquaman as a kid, which could be fun. Then, just to be outrageous, with a little help from Eve Myles [Gwen Cooper from *Torchwood*] I'd like to go as Wonder Woman, because that would just be off the wall!"

20/20

Arrow: Season Two is available to buy now on DVD and Blu-ray.



APOCALYPSE NOW

FORGET APOCALYPSE, WATCH OUT FOR STRYKER

X-Men star Josh Helman on why Days Of Future Past's timeline switch changes everything

WORDS **JAMES HOARE**

Not least of the timeline changes wrought by Bryan Singer's retro-tinged prequel sequel *X-Men: Days Of Future Past* is the doubt introduced to Wolverine's origin story. But while we fixate over whether Logan still gets his adamantium skeleton from black ops badass William Stryker, actor Josh Helman is keen to see whether the battle-hardened Colonel becomes the same architect of Weapon X who causes our hero so much pain.

"Purely selfishly, I would see the rest of Stryker's story. I think there's so much to explore. We really don't know that much about his history – obviously in *X2* we get to see a little bit of the back story in terms of his son, but even that... there's not many details there, so the idea of going back to the time in his life when Jason probably hit puberty and seeing his life and exactly what he was trying to accomplish is very interesting."

Sometime between *Days Of Future Past* and 2001's *X-Men* – in the original timeline, at least – Stryker turns his mutant son Jason over to Xavier for help, and the professor's subsequent failure hardens his heart against X-people.

In *Days Of Future Past*, although Stryker was being awakened to the threat posed by the Children of the Atom, the humiliation he faced at the hands of Mystique (Jennifer Lawrence) and Magneto (Michael Fassbender) could set him off on that path earlier.

"I am definitely going to be interested in seeing how the events of *Days Of Future Past* now influence the future," he explains, "Because, of course, we have an idea of the end of his career, but that was before this timeline came into effect, so I'm really interested to see how his perspective changes as a result of being manhandled by Mystique and Magneto and the other mutants."

It's not just the movie timeline that's been altered; it's ours too, as Helman was originally cast in *Days Of Future Past* as the Juggernaut. The character would have replaced Quicksilver (Evan Peters), with Magneto being broken out of his Pentagon prison by brute force rather than time-freezing grace.

"I immediately started physical training because I wanted to put on as much size as I could," laughs Helman. "I think I was four weeks into the process of egg whites and chicken breasts and protein shakes before I got a call saying, 'Good news and bad news', and the bad news was that in the latest version of the script, Juggernaut is no longer in it, but they were having trouble casting Stryker."



X-Men: Days Of Future Past will be released on DVD and Blu-ray on 10 November

MAD MAX 4 WAS DEMANDING

Josh Helman on Fury Road and bromancing Nicholas Hoult

Although *Days Of Future Past* made it to the big screen first, Josh Helman and Hank 'Beast' McCoy actor Nicholas Hoult had already bonded on the set of another classic sci-fi franchise: Tom Hardy-fronted actioner *Mad Max: Fury Road*.

"We spent six months together," says Helman. "The first day we met, I think we ended the day having a tea party in one of our rooms. We bonded over the fact that he's British, I'm Australian and most of everyone else was American. So we ended up just drinking tea and chatting."

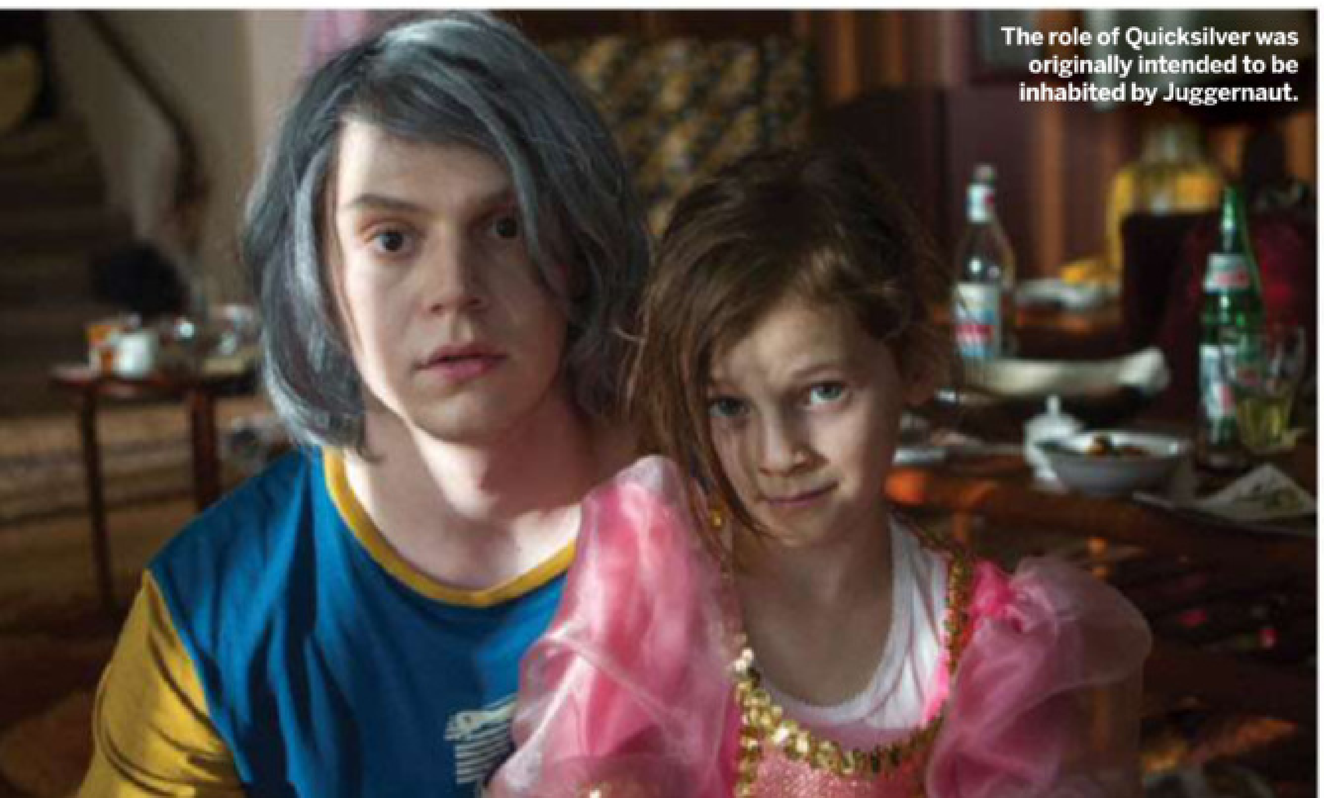
Filmed from July to December 2012 in Namibia in southern Africa with original director George Miller's love for car-flinging physical stunts, *Mad Max: Fury Road* was a literal crash-course for the FX-heavy *Days Of Future Past*.

The *Mad Max* movies may be cult classics, but as Ozploitation progenitors watching them is an essential rite of passage for young Australians, and Helman is no exception.

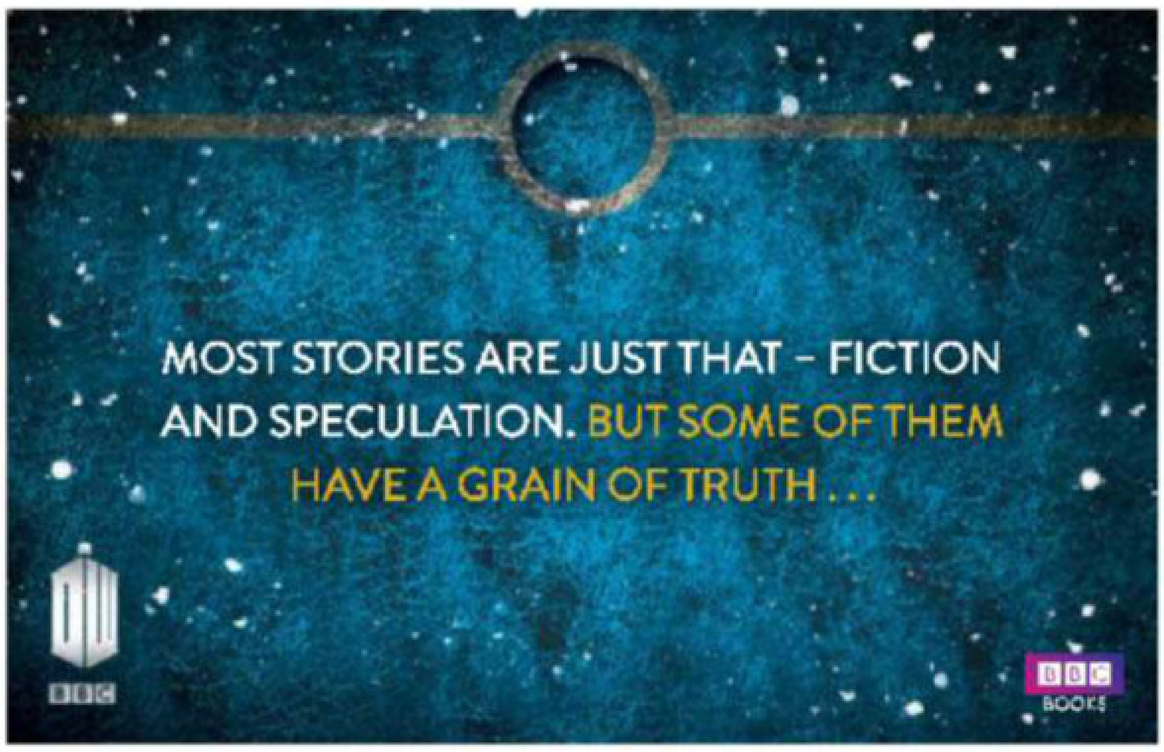
"It's remarkable," he admits. "For me as an Aussie, *Mad Max* has such an indelible place in our culture, so to not only be a part of the film, but to be a part of a film with George Miller at the helm is just... that's an opportunity that I never would have imagined."

Mad Max: Fury Road will be released in cinemas on 15 May 2015.





The role of Quicksilver was originally intended to be inhabited by Juggernaut.





KILLER CRITTERS

Meet the craziest creature feature of the year

WORDS **JONATHAN HATFULL**

Unless you've been living under a particularly well-hidden rock, there's a good chance that the word 'Zombeavers' will have entered your vocabulary over the last few months. It's the micro-budget feature that does exactly what you'd expect from the title, and the trailer racked up millions of views overnight.

Still, imagine if you will, the reaction of an actor getting a script with that title. "Well, I didn't take it seriously!" laughs star Rachel Melvin. "But I was pleasantly surprised to find that the script was not taking itself too seriously either. I loved that it was kind of in on the joke in and of itself."

That joke is the ridiculousness of the central concept, but there's something undeniably fascinating about the zombie critters who attack a group of holidaying students, and Melvin tells us that the reaction of the cast was much the same as ours. "I think the first night I actually saw a beaver, there was literally a circle where everyone stood around, and we were all so mesmerised. It's really cool."

The film has taken off at festivals, and Melvin tells us that its success is down to the simple fact that it's a movie that wants the audience to have a good time. "It's just a really fun movie, and let's be honest; there's not a lot of movies that you go to just have. There's not a lot of movies where I feel like you can just go to be entertained."



Zombeavers is available to buy on DVD and Blu-ray now, distributed by Universal Pictures.

ZOMBIE ANIMALS

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ZOMBEAVER



THE CAST IN RE-ANIMATOR



SUMATRAN RAT-MONKEY IN BRAINDEAD



ZOMBIE DOGS IN RESIDENT EVIL



SHEEP IN BLACK SHEEP



TWINS OF EVIL

The Soska Sisters talk See No Evil 2 and Painkiller Jane

WORDS **JONATHAN HATFULL**

Arthouse darling *American Mary* was one of the most acclaimed horror films of last year, so it was a bit of a shock when the Soska twins signed on for *See No Evil 2*.

"We really like to keep our audiences guessing," Jen Soska tells us. "I just hate to be labelled or pigeonholed," agrees Sylvia. "I saw that they're doing this contest for female filmmakers to do a short film on *Twilight*, and I messaged my people, 'Oh my God, I want to do a cool version of *Twilight*! I have a vagina! I can do it!'"

See No Evil 2 is a sequel to the 2008 WWE slasher movie, and they tell us that they were given a lot of freedom to make the film theirs. "It was amazing how much free rein we had – it's the least hellish experience I've ever had," Sylvia enthuses. "The female characters were definitely beefed up because we liked them being the aggressors," adds Jen. "It was so nice to have a gender reversal, where she brings her boyfriend into a morgue and he's scared like a little girl!"

Beefing up the female characters won't be a problem for their next movie, an adaptation of comic-book favourite *Painkiller Jane*. Sylvia says. "It's like *The Heat* on crack. It has so much horror and violence, but somehow manages to have humour."

They certainly won't be saying goodbye to horror, either. "I hate when someone gets their start and works largely in horror, and says, 'Well, I'm trying to do real movies,'" laughs Sylvia. "Horror movies are real movies! They're just cooler!"

See No Evil 2 is available to buy on DVD and now.



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TO INFINITY

SHATNER EXPLAINS IT ALL

Captain Kirk on how Star Trek continues to change the world

WORDS OLIVER PFEIFFER

STAR TREK PAST AND PRESENT

"I have never seen another *Star Trek*. I have rarely seen my own. I don't look at it now because it's like going into your attic and pulling out a picture of when you were slim and had life, and you think, 'My word, did I look like that?' Why did I feel so badly about myself back then, because I can't stand to look at myself now!

"I did see the first movie that JJ Abrams did because I knew people would ask me about it. Then I saw Leonard Nimoy shortly after and said, 'You know you're old when you go back in time and you're still old!' He didn't laugh very much at that!'"

BRINGING THE ENTERPRISE CAPTAINS TOGETHER

"I've recently been making documentaries about *Star Trek*. I did one called *The Captains* about the four other actors who have played the captains of *Star Trek*. I visited them, did in-depth interviews and they told me the story of their lives, I put it all together and it was very well received.

"I recently made a documentary called *Chaos On The Bridge*, which is about all the madness that ensued in the first two years of the making of *Star Trek: The Next Generation*. There was such insanity that went on, and I cover it in this documentary. It played at Cannes recently and got some great numbers."

STAR TREK 50TH ANNIVERSARY

"The anniversary is in 2016. What I want to do is look at the issues that were dramatised in *Star Trek*. Whether it was war, disease or pollution, issues were dramatised to one degree or another on *Star Trek*.

"So the kiss that Nichelle Nichols and I had, or that episode where the guy was half white and half black and the other guy was half black and half white, and they fought because they had the opposite colours... I want to look at how the show may have influenced history in some way."

SPACE AND BEYOND

"When the rocket launch was successful our ratings went up, and when the politicians got wind of that they voted for more money for the space programme.

"I was broke, divorced and sleeping in one of those pick-up trucks to save money on motels. *Star Trek* had just been cancelled, I was looking up at the stars, I had a little black and white TV set on my chest, and they were walking on the moon! The astronauts had invited me to Cape Canaveral, and I'd written on the spaceship 'I'll see you on the moon Captain Kirk'."

We spoke to William Shatner at Oz Comic-Con. To find out more, head to **www.ozcomiccon.com**.



HOT TOPICS

Your most-read posts on SciFiNow.co.uk



STAR WARS 7: JAMES LUCENO ON TARKIN & EU CANON
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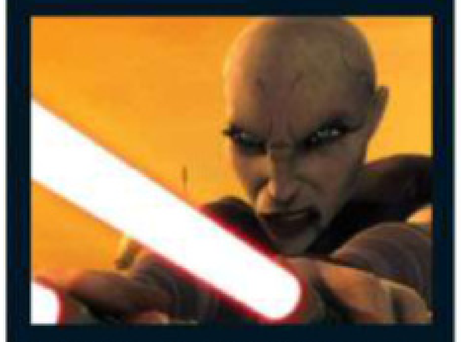
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DEADPOOL MOVIE: BAD NEWS ABOUT THE R-RATING, GUYS
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STAR WARS: THE CLONE WARS SEASON 6 ISN'T OVER YET
tinyurl.com/o6g529s

COSPLAY OF THE MONTH

Send your cosplay to @SciFiNo
or Facebook.com/SciFiNow



CAPTAIN AMERICA

COSPLAYER: SHARON BERGER **FROM:** PENNSYLVANIA, USA **PHOTO:** WALI UQDAH (FOTOGRAFY BY WALI) **FACEBOOK:** /COSPLAY10.6

1 THE CHARACTER

Captain America has always exuded strength and patriotism, but my favourite characteristic about this character is that he is fiercely loyal to his friends and offers hope in the darkest of circumstances. Ed Brubaker reflected this trait brilliantly in his writing of Cap; when Cap died in *Civil War*, the entire superhero community in the comics – and all of the readers – felt that loss. I loved the idea of representing this character that inspired others.

2 THE COSTUME

I have a wonderful group of friends and fellow cosplayers called Cosplay 10.6, and whenever I needed help or a sounding board, they'd offer assistance and advice. The most difficult task was creating my leather and 'metal' waist armour template. I had to cut all the pieces out of craft foam and edit them numerous times to ensure it would fit properly over my blue corset. Every stripe and metal strip is a separate piece! It was like a really complicated cosplay puzzle.

3 THE DESIGN

I have always wondered how this iconic character would have been represented if he were instead a woman during the Forties. Additionally, I wanted to pay respect to the World War II era by introducing industrial 'rivets' (which were actually made with hot glue!), which reminded me of some of the various intricate details that are found on tanks and planes. I also made sure to incorporate period-specific make-up and victory rolls in my wig as a nod to women's style from this time.

4 THE SHIELD

My shield was inspired by the WWII-era classic shape. I wanted it to be recognisable as Cap's shield, but reinterpreted with a more 3D industrial and vintage look. To make it easier to carry, it was made from craft foam modified with heat, with a middle layer of chipboard for stability. Acting as this character has been so rewarding. The best moments for me are when children respond with excitement and questions. If I can inspire kids to embrace their creativity then I will have done my duty as a 'real' superhero.

TRIVIA WHEN CAP DIES AFTER *CIVIL WAR*, BUCKY BARNES TAKES OVER AS THE STAR-SPANGLED HERO.

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JUSTICE BE DONE

WITH BATMAN V SUPERMAN: DAWN OF JUSTICE IN THE WORKS AND JUSTICE LEAGUE ON THE HORIZON, SCIFINOW TAKES A LOOK AT WARNER BROS' STRATEGY, AND FINDS OUT WHY IT DOESN'T HAVE TO FEAR MARVEL...

WORDS **POPPY-JAY PALMER, JONATHAN HATFULL** INTERVIEW **JAMES HAORE**

THE GAME HAS CHANGED. WHERE SUPERHERO MOVIES WERE ONCE THE DOMAIN OF SOLO COSTUMED CAPERS, NOW OTHERS HAVE BEEN WELCOMED to the party. Zack Snyder's *Batman V Superman*, the follow-up to *Man Of Steel* that sees the world's two most iconic superheroes, Superman (Henry Cavill) and Batman (Ben Affleck) cross paths, will be the party to end all parties.

With *Batman V Superman*, *X-Men: Apocalypse*, *Avengers: Age Of Ultron* and *The Fantastic Four* due to be released over the next couple of years, there has never been a better time to be a fan of superhero movies. If you thought the shit was real up to this point, just wait. Shit is about to get more real than it has ever been.

It's also getting a lot more geeky, with lesser-known properties like *Shazam!*, *Ant-Man*, *Doctor Strange* and *Deadpool* getting the Hollywood treatment. These characters, while well-known to dedicated comic-book readers, are new ideas to most cinema-goers. *Ant-Man*? Like, an ant that turns into a man? What's *that* about?

As if only to make things even harder to follow, it's also getting more complex. Character storylines are being brought together, à la *Avengers Assemble* and *Justice League*, timelines are being scribbled out in *X-Men: Days Of Future Past*, and big-name capes are making appearances in their television counterparts, creating a massive, barely comprehensible web of powers, spandex and murdered families. Knowing that Superman's real name is Clark Kent and that Batman is angry because he saw his parents gunned down in front of him just isn't going to cut it anymore, frankly. Not when *Batman V Superman* gets a preview at San Diego Comic-Con with a scene cut straight from the pages of Frank Miller's *The Dark Knight Returns*.

Obscure and complex doesn't seem to be hurting anyone, however, at least where Marvel is concerned. The best and most obvious example of this, of course, is *Guardians Of The Galaxy*. Read by a clique within a clique even in the world of comic-books, its advertising campaign went viral (we know you know all the words to Blue Swede's *Hooked On A Feeling*, so don't even pretend you don't) and at the time of writing it was cruising towards grossing $645 million at the box office worldwide. We spoke to Sam Hamm, screenwriter of 1989's *Batman*, the first draft of *Batman Returns* and Terry Gilliam's unmade *Watchmen* to find out what the deal is.

"*Guardians Of The Galaxy* – now the biggest mega-hit of the summer, and again that's a property of which there was no established fanbase [outside of the comic]," Hamm tells us. "You could at least say people have heard of the *X-Men*, people have heard of the *Incredible Hulk* – *Guardians Of The Galaxy* is one of the most obscure titles in the Marvel universe, and it comes up with the Marvel brand on it. What it shows is that Marvel has now become a brand name almost as big as their

corporate parents, Disney, and certainly as big as Pixar."

Marvel's expansion and dominance over the last six years has made such an incredible impact that it's now a legitimate subject for academic discussion. Dr Arnold T Blumberg has introduced a new course at the University of Baltimore under the banner of 'Media Genres: Media Marvels', and he tells us that the brand is now synonymous with the kind of expanded stories we've come to expect. "I think we're in an era today where a more sophisticated and demanding audience used to longer-form storytelling has pushed creators to provide the kind of material that audience expects and enjoys," he says.

"I think this approach will continue and be seen as a preferred way to build not only successful individual films, but long-term brand loyalty as well. As for DC and Warner Bros, there's something to be said for one comic universe learning from the success of another. Could they do as well if every single adaptation is entirely disconnected from every other one? Perhaps, but I'm not sure audiences will be as satisfied with that."

Marvel has a good thing going on. Every comic-book it touches turns into box-office gold. It hasn't had what could be described as a 'flop' since *The Incredible Hulk* in 2008, but even that made $260 million at the box office. Marvel's biggest strength is that it is Marvel; audiences want to see a Marvel film even when they only have a vague idea about what they are watching.

ON THE OTHER HAND, WARNER BROS HAS HISTORICALLY BEEN LESS CONFIDENT WHEN IT COMES TO TAKING RISKS. THEY ARE MORE COMFORTABLE WITH RUNNING the same characters that people know and love like Batman and Superman over and over again, but with different directors, writers, actors and costumes.

"I think DC has an uphill battle branching out to their lesser-known properties, but that's because they've neglected them for so very long," opines Blumberg. "Now, of course, that's changing, but it might take them a while to build the good will necessary to sell a mainstream movie-going audience on *Metal Men* in quite the way that Marvel did with *Guardians*. Still, a fantastic combination of creators could be all they need to overcome that hurdle."

Let's not forget that *Green Lantern* got an airing in Warner Bros' 2011 film, but ultimately it did badly. Directed by Martin Campbell and starring Ryan Reynolds, it made less than $220 million worldwide, and received mostly negative reviews, resulting in it becoming the 13th biggest box-office bomb in history. Since then, the studio has steered back towards what it knows works from experiences with past projects, releasing *The Dark Knight Rises* in 2012 and *Man Of Steel* in 2013. It hasn't attempted to make anything as ambitious or risky as *Guardians Of The Galaxy*.

"People will say, 'This is the new Marvel movie, I have to go see that' whether they know anything about *Guardians Of The Galaxy* or not," says Hamm. "And it's certainly true that DC is perceived by most fans as trying to play catch-up with what Marvel Studios has done, which is really kind of astonishing.

"I can't think of anything like it in the history of movies where they've decided to take the continuity of an entire universe woven through who knows how many different titles and bring it to the screen over a decade – over


The new take on the Dark Knight has divided fans.

FASHION POLICE Keeping Gotham's streets safe, one fashion victim at a time

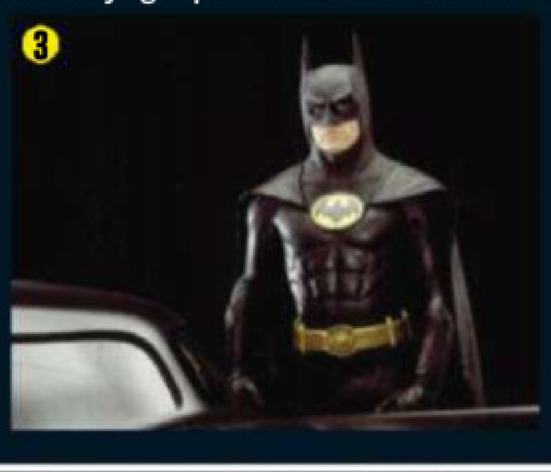
BATMAN (1943) 1
Heeled velvet boots, a statement belt and single-tone leggings can each be sexy when paired with the right outfit, but Lewis Wilson's drab ensemble is a sorry sight. The tasseled gloves, bed-sheet cape and his Nan's knickers really don't help matters. Forget Gotham's burglars, murderers and tax dodgers – Batman should be arresting himself for crimes against fashion.


1

BATMAN: THE MOVIE (1966) 2
A splash of colour goes a long way, but Adam West's super suit still resembles a particularly distressing body sock. The new utility belt is a cute and practical addition, but the only things worse than a yellow/grey colour palette are those eyebrows. Batman may think you're an idiot, but he doesn't need the brows for you to feel him judging you.


2

BATMAN (1989) & BATMAN RETURNS (1992) 3
Batman has learnt to accessorise, opting for stylish leather gloves and a metal belt that is much thinner than the last two. The almost head-to-toe black means he's finally ditched the awful grey, but it also means we can barely see him. Great for hiding in the shadows to escape detection, but terrible when trying to pick him out on the catwalk.


3

BATMAN: THE ANIMATED SERIES (1992) 4
Batman just can't stay away from grey. He's mixed it up this time with royal blue accents that create a look that manages to stay vibrant at night as well as in the day, but that might be because he's a drawing. Unfortunately, he's also gone back to his spandex roots. It seems that Batman can't say no to a figure-hugging one-piece...


4

BATMAN FOREVER (1995) 5
The accessories just keep on coming. Using broaches to attach his sweeping cape has added a much-needed hint of vintage glamour. Sadly, it's teamed with a suit that appears to be made entirely of rubber, which cheapens it right down. Batman better pray his next nemesis is the Talc Monster, because that's the only way he's going to get his suit on.


5

BATMAN & ROBIN (1997) 6
Batman can barely hear the calls of citizens in trouble because his entire outfit is screaming 'trying too hard'. The sharp metal accents are already a disaster – you could cut yourself just looking at them – but the codpiece and Bat-nipples make it practically obscene. The only thing that saves the suit is the fact that it's got George Clooney inside it.


6



"DC IS PERCEIVED BY MOST FANS AS TRYING TO PLAY CATCH-UP WITH MARVEL"
SAM HAMM

two decades. It's a pretty astonishing project to undertake, and they look to be succeeding with it in a way that I certainly could not have expected.

"Now, we're at a point where an audience has seen a couple of dozen superhero movies, and they'll be lining up to see the next one in May, or whenever it comes out, and they'll be lining up to see the next one after that in July, when it comes out. They very much know how to work them, what the connections are, so you can do a movie like *Guardians Of The Galaxy* which kind of tweaks a lot of the serious heavy-breathing stuff that typically goes on in the Marvel universe, because there's a huge audience that gets the joke and appreciates it."

DC Comics haven't always been so serious. The earlier Warner Bros screen adaptations of *Batman* and *Superman* were geared more towards campy fun, revelling in slapstick and knocking out cheesy one-liners faster than the Flash. In contrast to Marvel's fountain of bright colours, zany characters and non-stop quote-worthy lines, Warner Bros seems to have taken an Oath of No Jokes with their DC Comics films (even if everyone denies that it's an official ⇨

BATMAN V SUPERMAN V SOCIAL MEDIA

How Zack Snyder is winning the war on Twitter

We live in an age where keeping your summer blockbuster under wraps is a Herculean task. It's simply impossible to keep a handle on script leaks, gabbing actors and, of course, pesky paps. Remember those pictures of Marion Cotillard hopping into the Batmobile from the set of *The Dark Knight Rises*? Bad times.

However, Zack Snyder has so far kept a very firm grip on his bag of secrets. Instead, he's begun a surprisingly effective charm campaign, baiting JJ Abrams and the *Star Wars* camp with a fun, snippy back and forth, including Stormtroopers being arrested for trying to steal a Batmobile. Of course, Abrams responded by showing exactly what the Batmobile is compared to the Millennium Falcon.

Finally, let's not forget Amy Adams and Henry Cavill's adorable ASL Ice Bucket Challenge video, where the Man of Steel's square jaw starts to crumble... but only a little.











THE DARK KNIGHT TRILOGY (2005-2012) 7

Christian Bale's Batman is the most sensibly dressed so far. The body plates and mesh lining make it breathable, flexible and protective. The sturdy structure can almost withstand the force of an atomic blast. The utility belt in soft gold is a great addition, with enough pockets to store your keys, phone and wallet.



BATMAN V SUPERMAN (2015) 8

Ben Affleck's Bat-suit is less dress to impress and more dress to depress. He's known as the 'Dark Knight', but this is taking things too far. The only thing blacker than the new suit is the Joker's heart. We should get him a bell, or Superman will think he's fighting his own shadow.





Social media has been put to good use, with all sorts of glimpses and tongue-in cheek references.

rule). Their characters are now angst-filled, constantly frowning and lurking solemnly in a darkened room. *Man Of Steel* wrought titanic destruction on Metropolis that was capped by Kal-El snapping Zod's neck like a twig.

"I feel like it sometimes goes too far, rub-your-face-in-it darkness," Hamm tells us. "You see that expressed a little in the Frank Miller *Sin City* movies, the last of which just tanked at the box office here. I think those movies are trying so hard to be dark that they wind up being kind of silly and off-putting, like 'Okay, I get it – you're dark. Boy, are you dark. Gotcha – dark. Are... you trying to be dark here?' To me it's a matter of does it work for the character or not?"

ZACK SNYDER SEEMS TO HAVE TAKEN A LEAF OUT OF CHRISTOPHER NOLAN'S BOOK WITH HIS VERSION OF BATMAN. THE FIRST OFFICIAL PHOTO OF BEN AFFLECK WITH THE suit and the Batmobile was in greyscale, with Affleck looking down and gloomily reflecting on life. It matched the tone of Snyder's *Man Of Steel*, but it's still oh-so very dark. But no matter the tone, *Batman V Superman* is almost guaranteed to clean up at the box office. The two most well-known superheroes of any comic-book publisher in a film together, possibly fighting each other, is bound to draw in fanboys and girls everywhere. They will also be joined by Wonder Woman and Aquaman, and will set up a *Justice League* movie.

It's the *Avengers* Effect creeping up again. After establishing Iron Man, Thor, Captain America and the Hulk's characters in solo movies and Hawkeye and Black Widow within those, Marvel took a huge leap and made their first ever superhero team-up movie. So much super in one film had the fans swarming, and resulted it in being financially the most successful superhero movie of all time – not to mention the third most successful movie in general (behind *Avatar* and *Titanic*). On this basis at least, there is literally no way that *Batman V Superman* can fail.

"It's a matter of cranking out a few good movies," says Hamm. "They're not financially hurting at the box office, they're not exactly hurting at fan reactions to their big franchises – the Christopher Nolan *Batman* movies were enormous financial successes, *Arrow* is currently the most popular show on The CW network – which admittedly is one of the secondary networks – and there is a lot of buzz around *The Flash*. *The Superman* movies have not performed

17 THINGS WE KNOW ABOUT BATMAN V SUPERMAN (AND SOME THAT ARE JUST CRAZY SPECULATION)

1 IT OWES A LOT TO FRANK MILLER

It's going to draw heavily on *The Dark Knight Returns*. Snyder's been hitting that reference point hard since the announcement, and the glimpse of footage from this year's San Diego Comic-Con confirmed it.



2 IT WILL SOW THE SEEDS FOR JUSTICE

We know for a fact that Wonder Woman and Aquaman will be representing the Justice League contingent.



3 THE FLASH MAY MAKE A CAMEO

There's also a chance that we could see the Flash. Was this the reason for Scoot McNairy's bright green knee socks, or is he an alien with cyborg legs? Or is he, as some on-set reports suggest, a Jimmy Olsen still wounded by the events of *Man Of Steel*?



4 SUPERMAN COULD BE FRIEND OR FOE

Superman is seen as either a great guy or a bastard, with rumours flying about scenes showing protests against the Man of Steel and other rumours that it will feature a statue dedicated to him.

5 CHRIS TERRIO IS ON WRITING DUTIES

The script has been passed onto *Argo* screenwriter Chris Terrio. He doesn't necessarily have the geek chops of Joss Whedon, and he's not a writer like Zak Penn or Simon Kinberg, but he is an Academy award winner with serious cred.

6 LOIS LANE IS BACK

After seeing through Clark's disguise with little to no effort, Amy Adams is returning as Superman's love interest Lois Lane, but so far it's unclear how she will fit into the story.



7 WONDER WOMAN WILL APPEAR

Gal Gadot looks like a bad-ass Amazonian warrior in her first Wonder Woman picture, and all the haters can shut the hell up.





8 THE BATMOBILE WILL BE BIGGER AND MORE BRUTAL THAN EVER

The new Batmobile is even more of a tank than Nolan's. Forget the Tumbler; this looks like a war machine, which ties in yet again to Frank Miller's Batman, taking on street gangs with all kinds of firepower.

9 SUPES WILL FACE HIS GREATEST ENEMY

Lex Luthor, played by Jesse Eisenberg, is likely going to be a major part of proceedings. It's hard to imagine Eisenberg signing on for much less.



10 THE SUPPORTING CAST RETURN

Martha Kent (Diane Lane) and Perry White (Laurence Fishburne) are returning, as is Harry Lennix's General Swanwick, whose relationship with Supes ended on a cautious note at the end of *Man Of Steel*.

11 BATMAN WILL BE SHOWING HIS AGE

Ben Affleck is playing a Batman that is his own age. At 42, he's significantly younger than the Caped Crusader of *The Dark Knight Returns*, but older than Clark, and looks to be the angry, bitter Bats of Miller's story.

12 BEN AFFLECK MEANS BUSINESS

You might have an opinion about whether or not Ben Affleck is going to be any good as Batman, but he doesn't care what you think. When asked, he's consistently stated that he wouldn't have done it if he didn't think he could.



13 A NEW ALFRED

Get ready for a new kind of Alfred. In what could be an attempt to get away from Michael Caine's gruff taskmaster, Snyder has cast the silky Jeremy Irons as Alfred Pennyworth. It's an intriguing choice, but we're struggling to picture it.

14 CYBORG SHOWS UP

Victor Stone, aka Cyborg (played by stage actor Ray Fisher) is expected to have a small role in the film, but it could well set him up for a bigger part in *Justice League*.





15 AQUAMAN MAY HAVE HELPED OUT BEFORE

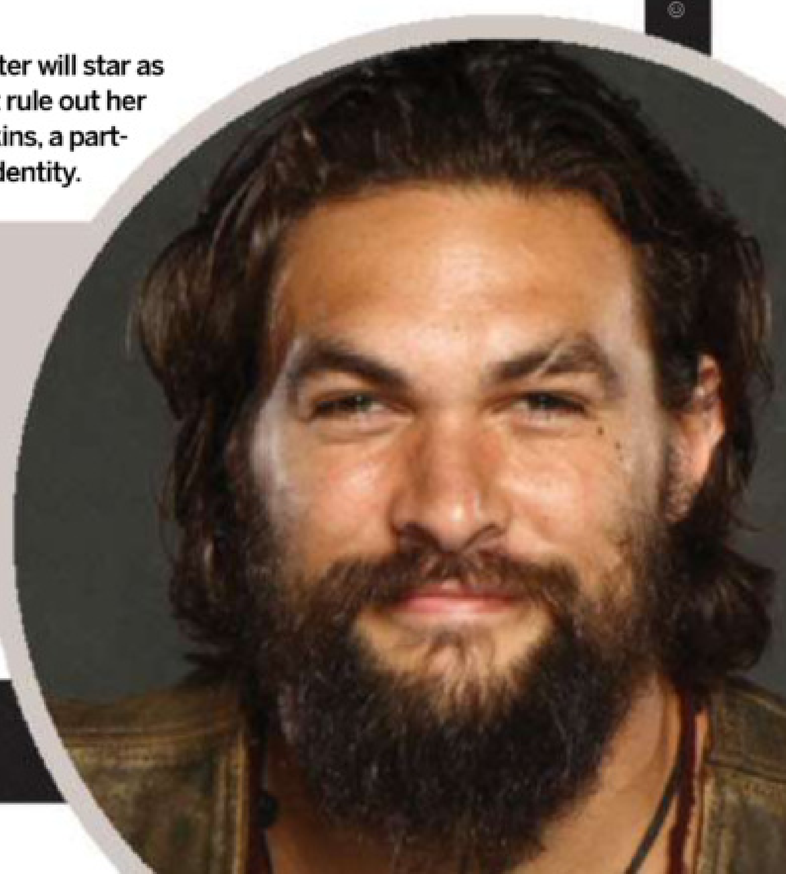
The Justice League may have been around in this new universe for longer than we thought. Word is that the whales that rescue Superman after he put out that oil rig fire were sent by Aquaman.

16 HOLLY HUNTER HAS A ROLE

Academy Award-winner Holly Hunter will star as a mystery character. Snyder didn't rule out her starring as a character like Leslie Thompkins, a part-time-ally of Batman who knows his true identity.

17 JASON MOMOA IS AQUAMAN

Just like Bats, everyone has an opinion on Aquaman. It's easy to make fun of a guy whose superpower is talking to fish, but if anyone can figure out a way to make him badass, it's Zack Snyder. The most recent comic-book incarnation pitches him as a warrior prince, and let's be honest, Snyder has already won half the battle by casting Jason Momoa.



© Antonio Garcia Rodriguez; Siebbi; Florida Supercon

MILLERWORLD

How Frank Miller has defined the face of comic-book movies



Key

- Big, tough hero
- Scantily clad dames
- Damsel in distress
- Bone-crunching violence
- Catholic guilt
- Corrupt politicians
- Ninjas
- Flag-flying patriotism
- Sharp suits
- Badass one-liners
- Big scary city

ROBOCOP 2 & 3

Miller wrote the scripts for the follow-ups to Paul Verhoeven's classic, although he's been vocal about how disappointed he was with the result.



BATMAN RETURNS

Co-writer Daniel Waters has cited *The Dark Knight Returns* as an influence on Tim Burton's none-more-dark *Batman* sequel.



DAREDEVIL

Miller's take on Matt Murdock was a big influence on Mark Steven Johnson's flawed movie adaptation.



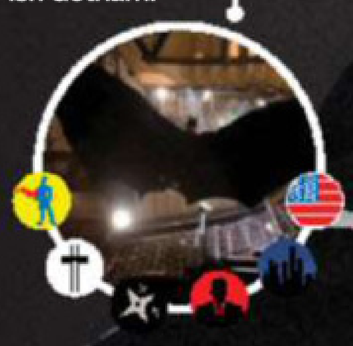
ELEKTRA

Miller created the character of the sai-wielding assassin, but the film was a clunky, terrible misadventure.



THE DARK KNIGHT TRILOGY

Christopher Nolan drew heavily on *Year One* and *The Dark Knight Returns* for his version of a gritty Batman in a realistic-ish Gotham.





SIN CITY

Robert Rodriguez co-directed this ludicrously faithful adaption of Miller's comics with the man himself and it's like being inside his head.

300

Following the success of *Sin City*, Zack Snyder adapted Miller's graphic novel and brought it to life perfectly, keeping the spirit of the author.





THE SPIRIT

Miller went solo behind the camera for his film of Will Eisner's classic comic series and floundered.



THE WOLVERINE

It's based on the saga by Miller and Chris Claremont, with the grim-faced hero facing an unfamiliar code of honour. And ninjas.



MAN OF STEEL

Snyder was clearly looking to Nolan for inspiration, and absorbed Miller influences. *Batman V Superman* makes it clear that's no accident.

© Rex

up to what they were hoping, but they've still done reasonably well.

"The concern with the DC properties is based on the ridiculous success that the Marvel universe has had. Fine, they screwed the pooch on *Green Lantern*, but they haven't attempted to bring that many characters to the screen and failed, just that they haven't created this unstoppable juggernaut in the same way that Marvel Studios did. I think if they can deliver a few movies with exciting characters that people want to see more of, they will find themselves in the position to make as many sequels as they desire."

IT'S NOT FAIR TO CONSTANTLY COMPARE DC AND MARVEL, AS WARNER BROS AND MARVEL STUDIOS GO ABOUT THINGS IN DIFFERENT WAYS. MARVEL IS MORE OPEN TO TAKING risks and jumping into the unknown with both feet, making what it reckons could be awesome. It is the hippy of the superhero film world, if you like; Warner Bros, on the other hand, is the businessman. Everything is done systematically. *Batman* has worked before, so they reboot it and reboot it again. Warner Bros will never have to persuade audiences to go and see a *Batman* film, because they were going to go anyway. They've already booked the day off. It's just a matter of whether the audiences will think it's better than the last one.

"It's always interesting how DC and Marvel seem to succeed at some things and fail at others, and often in direct opposition to one another," Blumberg tells us. "No one can argue with the success of Nolan's *Batman* movies or *Man Of Steel* no matter what they might think of the storytelling quality, so DC has hardly been absent in cinema. DC isn't trying to create a cohesive universe. For some, that might be seen as a miscalculation or even a failure, but if they achieve success with multiple separate series, they won't be concerned with the lack of one continuity while they're cashing all the cheques. I'd say that on one level it does feel like DC fandom loses out in a way that Marvel fandom doesn't – Marvel fans are getting to see their favourite universe of characters coming alive and (almost) all together."

> **NO ONE CAN ARGUE WITH THE SUCCESS OF NOLAN'S BATMAN MOVIES OR MAN OF STEEL**
> DR ARNOLD T BLUMBERG



• Ben Affleck (Batman), Henry Cavill (Superman) and Gal Gadot (Wonder Woman) assembled at the 2014 San Diego Comic-Con.

© William Tung: Rex

Indeed, *Man Of Steel* didn't do as well as it was expected to financially, but it can still be considered a hit, especially given the lacklustre performance of the distinctly unmemorable *Superman Returns*. People weren't turned off after Bryan Singer's tepid Seventies homage; they got over it quickly, and were ready to welcome Henry Cavill with open arms. The fact that *Man Of Steel* came in the form of an origin story helped to keep the franchise fresh.

"I can't tell you why all movies do this, but with *Batman* it struck us very early on that there's not a whole lot to explain," says Hamm. "But with Superman... this guy shows up among you, he's super-strong, he can fly, he can burn down walls with his heat vision, bullets bounce off him etc etc – what's all that about? How did that happen?

"It turns out that there is a fairly dramatic and visually spectacular story you can tell. I mean, boy, you've got a whole planet blowing up, and you've got a race to get a baby into a rocket ship so you can fire him off into another planet before the big explosion occurs – that's kind of dramatic, you've got something you can work with there. So as a prologue, that's pretty great."

Though Superman has had some hits and misses, Batman has been pretty consistent from the start, and has only got bigger. Christopher Nolan's *Dark Knight* trilogy was so off the charts that even the Academy recognised it in the form of a Best Performance by an Actor in a Supporting Role award, given to Heath Ledger posthumously for his turn as the Joker.

Statistically speaking, *Batman V Superman* won't flop; there's no way it can. Warner Bros is hitting the nail on the head, determinedly and repeatedly, by teaming up their two greatest assets, and by announcing *Justice League* before *Batman V Superman* even has a trailer, they are obviously expecting it to be a massive hit as well. *Justice League* offers a potential platform on which to introduce characters that are practically unknown to people unfamiliar with the comics, such as the rumoured *Metal Men* and *Legion Of Super-Heroes* films. Hopefully, Warner Bros will gain some more confidence in the value of secondary characters and spin off into shorts, solo movies and more TV shows. DC can only level up from here.

Batman V Superman: Dawn Of Justice is in cinemas on 25 March 2016.

TAKING AIM

WORDS **KRYSTAL SIM**



ARROW'S THIRD SEASON IS LOOKING TO BE ITS BEST YET, WITH EVEN MORE ACTION AS TEAM ARROW WRESTLE WITH THEIR IDENTITIES AND COME TO BLOWS WITH RA'S AL GHUL. SCIFINOW CAUGHT UP WITH STARS EMILY BETT RICKARDS AND COLTON HAYNES TO FIND OUT MORE...

SOMEONE, A FRIEND, ONCE TOLD ME THAT IF YOU SURVIVE A CRUCIBLE YOU GROW THE STRONGER FOR IT." THESE WORDS, SPOKEN BY OLIVER QUEEN (STEPHEN AMELL) IN the Season Two finale 'Unthinkable', are fitting, as *Arrow* too has gone through its own crucible. The show shrugged off tired *Dark Knight* comparisons and scepticism to emerge at the forefront of DC's ever-expanding television output – which is expanding this year with spin-off *The Flash*, as well as *Gotham* and *Constantine*.

The second season saw Oliver transition from vigilante to hero, able to dispense justice without taking lives, and by the season's finale Team Arrow was riding high.

Slade 'Deathstroke' Wilson (Manu Bennett) and his Mirakuru-fuelled army were defeated – without killing – while the ARGUS drone strike on Starling City was averted. Oliver's loyal cohort John Diggle (David Ramsey) even found out that he and Lyla (Audrey Marie Anderson) were going to be parents.

The series ended on a triumphant note, but teased myriad unanswered questions: what happened to Oliver in Hong Kong, where he ended up in the season's last flashback? How will Thea (Willa Holland) change under Malcolm Merlyn (John Barrowman)'s 'care', and what will Roy (Colton Haynes)'s new moniker be as he finally becomes Oliver's official sidekick?

Season Three picks up several months later. Crime is at an all-time low, and Captain Quentin Lance (Paul Blackthorne) has called off the Anti-Vigilante Task Force. Season premiere 'The Calm' kicks off with a James Bond-style intro, according to Amell.

He told Montreal Comic Con: "We start off the third season with a gigantic action set piece. You've seen pieces of it in the preview for Season Three – it's myself, Diggle, Roy in his whole costume, and of course, Felicity at the helm. It's just all of us kicking ass."

Everything appears to be coming up Milhouse. Oliver asks Felicity out on a date, seeing a chance to balance being the Arrow with being Oliver Queen, while giving Tumblr GIF ideas for the next six months.

But the life of a superhero is never that simple, with the new Count Vertigo (Peter Stormare) appearing on the scene to shake Oliver out of his complacency.

He also has a potential rival for Felicity's affections in the form of Queen Consolidated's new owner: square-jawed entrepreneur Ray Palmer (better known in the comics as The Atom), played by former Superman Brandon Routh. The actor recently revealed that he had seen drawings of his Atom costume, so a dramatic reveal looks likely before the end of the season.

Identity is a central theme, and not just for Oliver, according to producer and co-creator Marc Guggenheim: "Every other character on the show is dealing with some question of identity," he says. "Detective Lance, who is now Captain Lance, has basically taken a desk job, and is asking, 'If I can't be a cop the way I used to be, what am I?'

"Laurel is going to be dealing with this question of identity as she tries to walk the path that her sister walks. Is Thea Malcolm Merlyn's daughter or Moira Queen's daughter? Diggle: 'Am I a sidekick, am I my own man?' Felicity: 'Do I have my own identity?'"

Judging from their heated confrontation in the trailer, Oliver wants John out of the field – presumably because Daddy Diggle has far more to lose. Don't count him out this season

Opposite and below: Colton Haynes gets into costume, joining Stephen Amell's masked hero. Centre: Things are set to heat up between Felicity and Oliver.





Below: 'Olicity' at work.
Bottom: New threats abound with Peter Stormare as Count Vertigo.

though; with Lyla head of ARGUS, it's safe to say that Diggle will be more involved with them, not to mention the already introduced Suicide Squad, as well as looking for answers about HIVE – the organisation that hired Deadshot (Michael Rowe) to kill his brother.

With Thea gone, Roy's focus will be on fighting crime in his new secret identity. But is that Speedy, Red Arrow or Arsenal?

"I think that's going to be the joke of Season Three," Haynes says. "The guys will say 'Hey Speedy!' while I'm all, 'I said don't call me that.' Roy will be Arsenal, but they're going to play with it first, trying to find my nickname. I think he'll have the characteristics of Red Arrow – Arsenal was really troubled and a drug addict."

Roy's Mirakuru rampage resulted in Season Two ultimately resulted in the death of a police officer, and while he has no memory of doing this due to his withdrawal-induced amnesia, Haynes thinks the past will come back to haunt him. "I have a feeling that there really is no real cure," he tells us. "It will be interesting to watch if Mirakuru comes back into his life, or someone else on Team Arrow – I love that I can say that now!"

AFTER TWO SEASONS IN HIS RED HOODIE, HAYNES SAYS IT'S "TIME TO SEE HIM SUIT UP." IN FACT, THE NEW ARSENAL COSTUME LOOKS SO GOOD THAT AMELL HAS JOKED about the Arrow suit now being "the second nicest suit on the show." Sartorial jealousy aside, will acting as mentor to Roy bring out Oliver's lighter side?

"Oliver is going to start giving Roy more to do, and their brotherly connection is going to grow stronger. Stephen is awesome to work with, and I've never seen someone so busy in all my life. I also get to work with Emily more, which is really cool. She's the best."

As with any tight-knit group, there will be trouble ahead. "There will be secret bonds between a few on the team that they're hiding from the others," he teases "and it'll eventually cause a rift between them. Thea's left the city, but I have the feeling she'll come back wearing a lot of black. She's heartbroken that everyone's been lying to her, so she's going to stir up trouble."

The one-time bratty socialite's world was shattered when she discovered that she was actually the child of an affair between her soon-to-be late mother Moira (Susanna Thompson) and the ruthless Malcolm Merlyn. With Roy and Thea both in training, there could be an intense lovers' reunion further down the line.

"Roy still has feelings for Thea – that's going to be the difficult part," says Haynes. "The grass is always greener with Roy. His main goal was to join up with Arrow, but he got kind of scuffed off and ran back to Thea. He's always having to lie to everybody because it's been this fight between the woman he loves and his path in life.

"I can hint that a new love interest for Roy is on its way. There are a few in the comic-books, but I honestly don't know which one it could be."

One thing's for sure: it won't be Felicity. "People already hate Roy!" he laughs. "If I tried to break 'Olicity' up, I'd be ousted. I won a poll for the least-liked character, which Emily showed me because she was the most liked. She's read every single thing in the world [about the comics]."

The reaction to the DC characters added to the *Arrow*-verse last season was largely positive, particularly the Harley Quinn Easter egg in 'Suicide Squad'. But what other characters would Haynes like to see join the cast?

"I think I said the Hulk the other day, but that's Marvel so I should probably retract that," he says. "Everyone is just obsessed with Harley Quinn, and I didn't really know anything about the character until she came on and people lost their minds.



"PEOPLE ALREADY HATE ROY! IF I TRIED TO BREAK 'OLICITY' UP, I'D BE OUSTED"
COLTON HAYNES

THE LONGBOW HUNTERS

Some of the new characters to expect this season on Arrow



MATT NABLE IS RA'S AL GHUL

The leader of the League of Assassins and Nyssa al Ghul (Katrina Law)'s father. Traditionally one of Batman's greatest foes, he was mentioned throughout Season Two, and will show up in Three. Ra's trained both Sara Lance and Malcolm Merlyn, who have unfinished business.



BRANDON ROUTH IS RAY PALMER/THE ATOM

Queen Consolidated's new CEO, Palmer is a business rival of Oliver's. With Oliver broke, trying to get his company back and getting closer to Felicity, the last thing he'll want is someone taking over his company and making a move on Miss Smoak – especially with a jawline like that.



PETER STORMARE IS WERNER ZYTLE/COUNT VERTIGO

The first villain Team Arrow faces in Season Three, Werner Zytle replaces the Count (Seth Gable) as maker of the drug Vertigo – from which he gets his codename. Stormare was a delightfully creepy Lucifer in 2005's *Constantine*, so we expect good but decidedly weird things from him.



NICK TARABAY IS GEORGE 'DIGGER' HARKNESS/ CAPTAIN BOOMERANG

A former ARGUS operative out for revenge who uses boomerangs to take down his foes. Traditionally one of The Flash's enemies, he will reportedly appear in *The Flash/ Arrow* crossover event.



JR RAMIREZ IS TED GRANT/WILDCAT

In the comic-books, Wildcat is a member of the Justice Society for America, and a massively important figure in Black Canary's life. Grant will appear on the show as a former boxer with a mysterious past who now runs a gym for underprivileged youths.



DAVID CUBITT IS MARK SHAW/MANHUNTER

Not to be confused with the Martian Manhunter, Shaw will appear as an ARGUS agent in Corto Maltese who crosses paths with Diggle. Cubitt is currently slated to appear in the third episode of the series. In comic lore he has a connection to the Suicide Squad.



RILA FUKUSHIMA IS TATSU YAMASHIRO/KATANA

Tatsu and her husband Maseo (Karl Yune) will appear in Oliver's Hong Kong flashbacks as his handlers. Both skilled in martial arts, Tatsu's nickname comes from her choice of weapon. Fukushima was one of the best things to come out of *The Wolverine*.



AMY GUMENICK IS CARRIE CUTTER/CUPID

The *Supernatural* actress will guest star in *Arrow* as Carrie Cutter – also known as Cupid – a crazed fan of the Arrow who shows her love in terrifying ways. Sort of like Becky, the fangirl who was obsessed with Gumenick's screen children, Sam and Dean Winchester.



MATT WARD IS SIMON LACROIX/KOMODO

Tron: Legacy's Matt Ward will play Komodo early on in the show's run, and the story will be tied in to the series' main story arc. Another archer with a deadly aim, the character in the comics was once the protégé of Oliver Queen's father, Robert.

"Robin is probably my favourite; I like the sidekicks. In everything I've done I've been the angry jock asshole, so it's nice to play that, because Stephen can hold the reins. There are a lot of similarities between Roy and Robin this season, and you know there are always possibilities for other sidekicks to join the show. Everyone's talking about *Nightwing*, and then there's *Young Justice*."

WHEN SARA (CAITY LOTZ) DRAPED HER BLACK JACKET OVER LAUREL (KATIE CASSIDY)'S SHOULDERS BEFORE LEAVING FOR NANDA PARBAT, THEIR father seemed to anticipate the audience's reaction: "Don't get any ideas."

Sara will be back as a recurring character in the third season. However, it seems as if the question of her sister taking up the mantle of Black Canary – as she does in the comics – is nearing an answer.

Laurel will be working more closely with Team Arrow since learning Oliver's secret. Most significantly, JR Ramirez will join the series this year as Ted 'Wildcat' Grant, a former boxer and, in the comics, the character who trained Black Canary to fight.

Whether this spells an untimely end for Sara remains to be seen. Cassidy has kept quiet on the details of Laurel's arc, but has shown off her biceps in recent interviews, leaving fans with a good idea of where her character is heading.

Casting news for Season Three has opened up a world of rumours, theories and speculation, with characters including Katana (Rila Fukushima), Captain Boomerang (Nick Tarabay), Manhunter (David Cubitt) and Komodo (Matt Ward) making appearances this year. But the news that *Riddick* star Matt Nable would be playing iconic villain Ra's al Ghul has blown everything else out of the water. The question on everyone's lips is when will he make his presence felt in Starling City?

The Demon's Head – as he is sometimes called in the comics – is to appear in *Arrow*'s 50th episode, which may shed light on Malcolm's time with the League of Assassins. Since his 'Undertaking' (in which he laid waste to a swathe of the city) has put Malcolm firmly on the League's shit-list, it may be an explosive showdown, or perhaps lead to an Arrow/Dark Archer team-up.

Executive producer Andrew Kreisberg said at Comic-Con: "We wanted to do something that we hadn't done before. Malcolm had a specific agenda, and in Season Two, Slade's plan was about revenge.

Bottom: Ex-Superman Brandon Routh will star as Ray Palmer, aka The Atom. Opposite: Will Laurel take the place of her sister Sara (bottom), as the Black Canary? And what's in store for the new 'Captain' Lance (middle)?

"For Season Three, we wanted a new challenge for Oliver. The villain speaks to the emotional theme of the season, which is, 'Can I be both the Arrow and Oliver Queen at the same time?'"

Olicity fans have had the whole summer to ponder if that tender moment on the beach after the ruse-that-broke-a-million-hearts could mean something more.

"How's your heart?" asks Emily Bett Rickards, insisting that we sit with her on the same couch and talk it over. It would be rude to say no to Felicity Smoak, MIT class of '09.

"They were about to feed you that second bit of cake, and then they took it away," she says with a devilish smile.

Miss Smoak has a priceless habit of blurting out the wrong thing, and her nervous, socially awkward schtick has made her character hugely endearing. She isn't shy about teasing Oliver – it's a dynamic that's kept him from veering towards too many emotionally stunted heroine clichés, and made their friendship more realistic. Rickards believes they need each other.

"She's so well-rounded. She's still figuring everything out, and that's why people relate to her, because nobody has figured stuff out. Oliver feels like he has, but she's the one saying, 'you haven't!' That's why Oliver needed Felicity, and she needed him."

The pair start off the season on a real date, but Rickards is sceptical about them as a couple.

"I think Olicity is a popular idea, but I don't know as an audience member if I really want that," she says. "Because everyone loves torture. The fans love that they need to

Flash Lightning

The worlds of *The Flash* and *Arrow* will cross over in a two-hour special. The CW is airing the first season of *The Flash* a day before new *Arrow*, and both shows' eighth episodes will make up a two-hour crossover special.

Emily Bett Rickards, whose character Felicity Smoak got close to Barry Allen (Grant Gustin) when he was introduced in Season Two, will also appear in the series. The actress said she was keen to feature on the show, but hoped some surprise cameos wouldn't be leaked. "*The Flash* needs to be its own show. They'll maybe have the odd surprise, but I hope it doesn't leak, because I'd love for people to be watching and think, 'Oh my God!' Your heart goes a little crazy, and it's so cool when you don't know."

Arrow's Colton Haynes says *The Flash* highlights just how big the *Arrow* universe is getting.

"It's only going to keep growing. Grant [Gustin] is the coolest person in the world, you guys are going to love him. Grant has this great quirkiness and heroism to him."



ask for it. But I'm like that too: 'Mom, I really want that red bike for Christmas. Okay, and now I want a basket!'"

Rickards is much-loved by the *Arrow* fan base, and it's not hard to see why. The gritty first season needed a ray of dorky sunshine, and she was the perfect counterbalance to Oliver's seriousness. To think she was only supposed to be a one-off guest star.

"I was supposed to be in that one episode, and Stephen sang my praises. The show needed her too – I mean, she's the light part of the show. It's a good thing I didn't completely bomb.

"Felicity is a strong woman on television. There has to be more of that, and I mean independently strong."

While there have certainly been many physically tough women on TV, the Canadian actress feels that all too often they are "sexed up", while Felicity manages to be a tenacious, intelligent and desirable woman on her own terms, and she doesn't need a superpower to fit in.

"I don't want to take the sensuality away from it, because I think it's important for women to say, 'I can be sexy, smart and strong.' That's a good thing. Kerry Washington in *Scandal* is all of those things.

"She's super smart, so I think that puts her in the calibre of having a superpower. I guess maybe if she could read minds – no, actually she'd hate that."



"HER NAIVETY IS DISINTEGRATING – HER INNOCENCE. BUT 'HOPEFUL' IS A GOOD WORD FOR HER"
EMILY BETT RICKARDS

THE FIFTH EPISODE OF THE NEW SEASON, 'THE SECRET ORIGIN OF FELICITY SMOAK,' WILL FLASH BACK TO FELICITY'S TIME AT MIT, AND FLESH OUT SOME OF HER PAST.

"We get to explore more character back stories," she says of this series. "The first season was finding out about the vigilante, and the second was him becoming the Arrow. Now, we have this huge ensemble cast, so many strong characters and a solid story base, we're going to be able to see more of them."

Since taking on the role, Rickards has become a comic reader herself, firing out the phrase "Firestorm's stepmom" at the very mention of her character's origins in *Green Arrow*. Colton did say she knew her stuff.

"I'm getting better," she beams. "I didn't know them before, but I'm a huge reader. And now I can relate to them, and I do like them. It's interesting to see Felicity in the comics now that it looks like me. I know she will be in them more frequently, so that's very cool."

As for the future of her character and the show going into its third year, Rickards thinks having more allies in the inner sanctum will be exciting for the team, and that Felicity is perhaps less wide-eyed than she once was.

"Her naivety is sort of disintegrating – her innocence. But 'hopeful' is a good word for her. I might add that to her vocabulary of adjectives. Having Roy more in the team will be interesting, as it's mainly been the three of them [Oliver, Felicity and Diggle]. Plus, it was so nice having another woman in the Foundry when we had Sara."

Amell said recently that while he missed the Hood from Season One, he liked the Arrow better, but "I think that I would like being the Green Arrow best," so it seems that the character and series are still on a journey.

Third seasons can often prove definitive; from the reveal of Locutus of Borg in *Star Trek: The Next Generation* to the introduction of Faith in *Buffy* – it's the year the groundwork pays off.

Arrow has come a long way and done the seemingly impossible: keeping existing *Green Arrow* fans happy while intriguing newcomers. With so many challenges ahead for the established ensemble, and an expanding cast of villains and allies plundered from the rich back catalogues of the DC universe, Season Three looks like it will be *Arrow*'s most ambitious yet.

Arrow is airing now on The CW in the US, and will air in the UK later on this year.

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COSPLAY IS TAKING OVER. EVERY CON IS NOW A RIOT OF COLOURFUL COSTUMES, ELABORATE PROPS AND MASSIVE HAIR, BUT WHERE DO THEY COME FROM, AND HOW DO THEY FIND THE CONFIDENCE? WE ANSWER ALL THIS AND MORE IN 11 ALL-IMPORTANT QUESTIONS...

EVERYTHING YOU WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT COSPLAY...

=BUT WERE TOO AFRAID TO ASK=

WORDS ABIGAIL CHANDLER

ANYONE WHO HAS ATTENDED CONVENTIONS OVER THE LAST FEW YEARS WILL NO DOUBT HAVE NOTICED A GRADUAL CHANGE. TIME WAS YOU'D see a few Judge Dredds and Wonder Women posing for the odd photo, but they were very much in the minority. Now, any convention worth its salt has dedicated cosplay zones, talks from leading cosplayers and high-production masquerades to crown the best costumed performer of the event. Cosplay has gone almost mainstream, even if it can still baffle people.

The term 'cosplay' (a contraction of 'costume' and 'play') was first coined by Nobuyuki Takahashi in 1984, but cosplay existed long before there was a name for it. It didn't start in Japan either, contrary to popular belief. As early as 1908, people were dressing up as comic-book character Mr Skygack from Mars. The first ever World Science Fiction Convention in 1939 saw a couple of people dress as characters from pulp magazines.

But in recent decades, Japan has certainly been dominating cosplay. Even in Europe, the largest cosplay competition of the year takes place at the Japan Expo in Paris. But western cosplay is finally coming into its own, leaving behind much of the anime and manga influence of Japanese cosplay and instead drawing inspiration from comic-books, film and TV.

1 HOW DO YOU GET INTO COSPLAY?

Walking the floor at the London Film And Comic Con and chatting to various cosplayers, there was one thing that they all had in common: none of them planned to become cosplayers. There was no big plan for internet domination when they first put on a costume. Words like 'snowballed', 'spiralled' and 'addicted' are thrown around with abandon. Cosplayers come from an impressively wide variety of backgrounds, but the one thing they all seem to have in common is that from the first time they put a costume on, it got its claws into them.

Stacey Rebecca made the relatively short leap from modelling to cosplaying. "I used to think that people who dressed up at conventions were kind of weird," she says, laughing as she indicates her own Ewok costume. "And then I just fell into it and became one of those weirdos. There's no going back now!"

2 HOW DO YOU PICK A CHARACTER TO COSPLAY AS?

Cosplayers have varying criteria for their characters. For some, it is purely

COSPLAY FOR BEGINNERS

Everything You Wanted To Know About Cosplay (But Were Too Afraid To Ask)...



Stacey Rebecca as Magik from the X-Men, photo by Sonesh Joshi Photography.

an expression of their fandom, while others are attracted to the technical challenges of a particular outfit. Ivy Doomkitty, a cosplayer who got into the community via body modelling for artist Frank Cho, echoed the sentiments of a lot of cosplayers when she told us, "I cosplay for me. I do it because I love the characters. I wouldn't cosplay a character I didn't like."

Laura Sindall, who combines cosplay with her job as a costume and prop maker, admits that for her, "a lot of the time it's passion for the design, although obviously I have to like the character as well." She went on to explain the symbiotic relationship that can spring into being between a cosplayer and the character they cosplay: "By [cosplaying] you grow quite close to the character and start to understand them and why they do certain things, why the designer chose certain aspects for them. So I choose a character quite often on the strength of their personality, but also on the design that they wear, and then a love affair grows from that."

3 DO YOU HAVE TO MAKE YOUR OWN COSTUMES?

There are companies who supply all or parts of costumes for cosplayers who want to engage with the community but lack the time or skills to make their own costume ("There are so many different types of cosplay, and people get so much out of it in different ways," says Stacey). But it seems that cosplayers who make their own costumes are more invested in the community.

Cosplay often gives people a chance to learn new things or indulge a creative ➪

passion that has to be buried in their day job. "I never had the opportunity to study anything that was particularly creative," says Benjamin Hunt, aka Enja Cosplay. "What I've found with cosplay is that it's given me the opportunity to learn a huge array of creative [skills]. I can choose when and where I want to learn, and what I'd like to learn... and it's given me a creative outlet that I don't really get enough."

Over time, cosplayers often teach themselves how to work with fabric, armour, chain mail, corsets, props and more. "Every time I make a costume, I push myself to do something better than I've ever done before," Benjamin says, "and I think by the nature of that, each thing that I create becomes my new favourite."

His cosplay partner Laura Sindall adds, "I couldn't name another hobby where – I mean, it goes beyond a hobby really; it's part of your life, it's incredible – where you learn so many skills."

4 BUT HOW CAN YOU LEARN HOW TO MAKE COSTUMES WHEN YOU'RE COSPLAYING ALONE?

People often cosplay in groups, helping each other on the way. Even if you cosplay alone, the community is welcoming and helpful, sharing knowledge and even giving talks and tutorials at conventions to help people develop their costume-making skills.

Laura encapsulates the feelings of the community when she says, "I love sharing knowledge and trying to help where I can and showing my experience, because that's how I learnt: from other people doing that. It's nice to be able to give back to a community that's given you so much."



5 COSPLAY IS JUST ABOUT MAKING A GOOD COSTUME, THEN?

Well, that's half of it, as the name suggests. The other half comes in the performance of the character. Cosplay photographer Carlos Adama says, "a good cosplayer in my book is not someone who just puts on a costume; they *become* the character, which is the appeal for a lot of them, I think. You can tell with some cosplayers that they really do change their body posture or the way they're behaving. For some people it's very liberating, because you are embracing an alter ego; you are cosplaying a character that you identify with or look up to."

You'll see that when cosplayers pose for photos at a convention they immediately go into character via well-rehearsed poses. This goes even further with professional cosplay photoshoots or competitions, where the cosplayer essentially plays the character – a cross between an actor and a model.

6 SO YOU'VE GOT TO LOOK LIKE THE CHARACTER YOU'RE COSPLAYING AS?

That's entirely up to the cosplayers. For some, the challenge is replicating a character as closely as possible, while for others it's about taking a favourite character and altering them to match their looks. Cosplayer Deborah George sums it up nicely: "I think the spirit of cosplay is 'do anything



Left: Tabitha Lyons with a professional Cosplay Shoots set and shoot. Find out more at www.magicbeanstudio.co.uk.

Below: Benjamin Hunt and Laura Sindall on stage as Loki and Black Widow at the European Cosplay Gathering, photo by James Cao.



you want to'. There shouldn't be any boundaries stopping you: race, sex, age, whatever. Because that's the whole idea: we all enjoy something about the characters, so it doesn't matter. Everyone buys the comics, so why not everyone dress as anyone?"

The cosplay community is full of crossplay (dressing as a character of the opposite gender), or playing around with a character's look (what if Black Widow was in the Victorian era?). There are really no rules.

7 WHAT IF YOU'RE A BIT TOO SHY TO DRESS UP IN PUBLIC?

Looking at cosplayers posing for photos or flashing the flesh, it's hard to imagine that they weren't born with the swaggering confidence of Tony Stark. But for a lot of cosplayers, it was the act of first putting on a costume that gave them the confidence they now appear to possess.

Leading cosplayer Ivy Doomkitty is a gorgeous, welcoming and confident woman (her business card names her as an 'entertainer' and 'host', as well as cosplayer and costumer), but that wasn't always the case. "Honestly," she says candidly, "if it wasn't for Frank Cho, or for me cosplaying, I would not have the level of confidence that I have now, because before Frank and before cosplay I had zero self-confidence and self-esteem. So it's definitely one of those things that I wish I would have gotten into a long time ago, instead of being afraid of what other people would say. Because I was worried about others and their thoughts, I delayed myself in doing something that I really enjoy, and because of that I also delayed feeling better about myself."

Deborah George echoes the sentiment: "I used to feel really self-conscious before, because I'm near hitting on 50, but then I thought, 'Sod it, I'm a big kid anyway'... I'll be doing it until I'm about 85!"

8 SO, I'VE GOT MY COSTUME. WHAT ELSE DO I NEED?

For a photoshoot, setting is vitally important. As photographer Carlos Adama points out, "I try to work on location and make the location match the character, so you have the right character in the right context. Like you wouldn't have, let's say, Batman in a field. It doesn't make sense."

A lot of cosplay photography happens on the fly, in car parks of convention centres or in appropriate settings in public (where Carlos says you have to deal with some "funny looks", "catcalls or wolf whistling" and "people yelling the wrong character name").

However, as the popularity of cosplaying grows, a professional industry is springing up around it.





Top: Laura Sindall as Black Widow, photographed by CoolADN.

Above: Benjamin Hunt as Loki, photographed by Lucas Ambrosio Photography.



GO BIG OR GO HOME

Why the ECG is the geek Olympics

For really serious cosplayers, the European Cosplay Gathering is where it's at. It takes place at Japan Expo in Paris every year, but it's more than a simple costume parade. Heats take place in 11 countries, with 800 cosplayers across Europe entering. The winners in each category progress to compete in the finals.

Laura Sindall and Benjamin Hunt are the ECG champions thanks to their performance as Black Widow and Loki.

"It's amazing being on a really high-production stage with 16,000 people watching you perform," Laura says, "We had to do a two and a half-minute performance, write the whole performance, do audio and come up with ideas and tricks."

Competitors need to produce two distinct costumes and performances – for the qualifier and final. Moreover, they're expected to recreate moments from the source material and produce audio, props, lighting cues, special effects and anything else needed to bring their cosplay to life.

Winners are recompensed with cash prizes, but large-scale competitions like these are an expensive business. In that sense, the groups have an advantage. "It becomes easier if you do it in pairs or a group," Benjamin says. "The costumes we were making took us months and were quite high-budget, and splitting the work-load, cost, time and being able to support each and encourage each other through that is a real positive."

European Cosplay Gathering manager Benjamin Zafrany highlights some of the ways that the competition differs from the Japanese World Cosplay Summit. "There is more of a performance emphasis at ECG, a bigger variation in categories and fewer entry restrictions." In keeping with the community feel, Benjamin says, "I'm working hard on making the experience a wonderful memory for all the participants, and help them create bonds with each other through activities, parties and so on."

Find out more about the European Cosplay Gathering at www.european-cosplay-gathering.com.

Studios like Cosplay Shoots, which began life as a children's photography studio, cater to cosplayers and provide authentic sets to help bring their cosplay to life. "There is a lot of background research that goes into the sets," says Richard Strom, co-founder of Cosplay Shoots, "such as collecting reference images to study, thinking about how each set can be used for different scenes with different characters, so that a snow and ice world could then be used for *Star Wars*' Hoth system, *Frozen*, *Skyrim* and so on."

Cosplay Shoots even add special effects to their shoots, which is "When the real 'wow' happens. From lightsaber glows, realistic flames, rainfall, smoke – anything we need to make the shots look movie-real."

9 WHAT IF I'M A MAN? ONLY WOMEN COSPLAY, RIGHT?

Have you ever actually been to a convention? There are a lot of men in costume – probably close to a 50-50 gender split. European champion Benjamin Hunt reckons that "just because of the nature of publicity, it's always the beautiful girls who are going to be getting the most photos. But maybe that distorts the public's perceptions, and you miss out on all the fantastic male talent there is out there."

Benjamin has further thoughts on why cosplay is considered a feminine pursuit: "I think that there may have been a time when there were more female cosplayers than male, because I think a lot of making costumes is things like sewing and things that have a feminine connotation to them, perhaps. But as it's become more acceptable that guys have lots of skills in anything, it's okay for guys to get involved. There are other things like armour making and prop making and lots of different things that are 'suitable' for guys to publicise themselves doing."

10 BUT COSPLAY IS JUST A KINKY SEX THING, RIGHT?

Without exception, every cosplayer we spoke to said they wished they could dispel that particular myth.

Stacey Rebecca has a particularly succinct way of putting it: "A lot of people still think it's a kinky thing, but it's really not. A lot of people ask, 'Do you wear your costumes in the bedroom?' No. They're warm and uncomfortable, and I don't know why anyone would want to wear them in the bedroom."

"A LOT OF PEOPLE THINK ITS A KINKY THING. BUT IT'S NOT."



Some cosplayers admitted that there might be a small group of cosplayers who do it to be sexy, but most do it for the creative outlet or for the community.

11 BUT IT'S DEFINITELY JUST FOR WEIRDOS, RIGHT?

Well, you've certainly got to have an interest in anime/comics/games/film etc to get involved, but does that really make someone weird these days?

"There are people from all different cultures and backgrounds here," says Benjamin Hunt, "and no one cares where you're from, what you do or how you look. There's a sense of shared camaraderie and passion for what we do that you rarely see in anything else."

Photographer Carlos Adama has the last word on it: "It's just someone's passion. It's not any different to, you know, people who go to the football. They put on their own costume too, if you think about it."

Well, when you put it like that, it's really not all that strange.



Below: Laura Sindall as Queen Ravenna from *Snow White And The Huntsman*, photo by Rich North and Colin J Smith.

A COSTUME IS NOT CONSENT

The ugly world of cosplayer harassment and how it can stop

San Diego Comic-Con became a focus for controversy this year. The group Geeks For CONsent petitioned them to implement a specific anti-harassment policy, to no avail. The convention made the news again when model and cosplayer Alicia Marie was molested by a man who put his hand down her bikini bottoms. He was fought off by fellow model Adrianne Curry, who happened to be carrying the butt of a bullwhip, but cases like these are depressingly familiar.

Photographer Eddie of Food And Cosplay has taken to carrying a whiteboard around conventions and asking cosplayers to write down stories of harassment they've received. He says that "It's mainly online where people feel like they need to comment with negativity. I do feel like most do it thinking it's funny, but some cosplayers might not see it that way."

Here are some tips to make sure you're treating cosplayers with respect:

- Ask before taking a photo of them. They'll probably be happy to oblige.
- If someone is wearing a skimpy outfit, it doesn't mean they're inviting lewd behaviour.
- Keep your hands to yourself. If you're curious to know what the armour is made of, ask them. Don't just grab.
- Groups of men, don't surround a lone female cosplayer. It can be more intimidating than you realise.
- Restrict your compliments to their outfit – not how good their arse or abs look in it.
- Cosplayers put weeks of effort into their costumes – mocking them is never cool.

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Agents Of SHIELD



PICKING UP THE PIECES

MARVEL'S AGENTS OF SHIELD RECOVERED FROM A SLOW START TO FINISH STRONGLY, WITH THE TITULAR SPY AGENCY DISMANTLED AND COULSON PUT IN CHARGE. WE INTERROGATE THE SHOW'S PRODUCERS AND THE STARS THEMSELVES ON HOW SEASON TWO WILL CHANGE EVERYTHING...

WORDS **EDWARD GROSS**

THERE'S A PALPABLE SENSE OF EXCITEMENT GREETING THE SECOND SEASON OF MARVEL'S AGENTS OF SHIELD THAT IN SOME WAYS IS A LITTLE SURPRISING considering the reaction from viewers during much of the show's inaugural year.

For little more than half a season, the characters and events of *SHIELD* seemed to be locked in meandering mode, with not much happening. Regular viewers were left wondering when things would kick into gear and what the show's producers were waiting for. As it turned out, they were waiting for the release of *Captain America: The Winter Soldier*, which changed everything.

Leading into and out of the events of that film, *SHIELD* became a very different show, with the collapse of the titular covert agency, the infiltration of HYDRA virtually everywhere – including Agent Phil Coulson (Clark Gregg)'s team in the form of agent Grant Ward (Brett Dalton) – and Nick Fury (Samuel L Jackson) showing up to appoint Coulson as the new director of SHIELD, entrusted with rebuilding it from the ground up. Coupled with the cliffhanger regarding the status of Fitz (Iain De Caestecker), who nearly sacrificed his life to save teammate – and possibly love interest – Simmons (Elizabeth Henstridge), and the aforementioned feeling of audience excitement and anticipation is unsurprising.

"Last we saw, SHIELD had completely fallen apart and Coulson was tasked with rebuilding it," says executive producer Maurissa Tancharoen. "What does that mean to be the director of something that has fallen apart? I think going into this season, our team has become true underdogs – which they weren't last season at all. They were a big, shiny, shadowy institution that had a giant helicarrier. Now, they are starting with nothing, so it's going to be very interesting to see our characters emotionally deal with that and struggle to carry out what their duty is with the limited resources they have."

Adds executive producer Jed Whedon, "One of the things that's fun for us in Season Two is we had a lot of groundwork to lay in the first season. We had to introduce everybody, and they're not characters from the comics, so there was a lot of work to be done to get the audience to know them. Now that they do, we can hit the ground running with them in terms of everything they went through last year, focusing on how it's emotionally affected them and how this new

mission emotionally affects them. We'll also be introducing some new people into the mix and see how that plays out."

As executive producer Jeph Loeb explains it, year two is going to pick up exactly where the show left off in Season One in the sense that Coulson has been given the directive to rebuild SHIELD and, most importantly, "to get it right."

"What does that mean?" he asks rhetorically. "What will Coulson become? What will it become, and what will the show become? What's exciting to us is that while this is happening, we're then also going to be able, with *Agent Carter*, to go back to the beginning, to see the reason why there is a SHIELD. You can go to the first SHIELD agent while the current director is trying to figure out what's going to happen in the future, which will be juxtaposed in a way against what happened in the past."

The aforementioned *Agent Carter* marks yet another connection to the Marvel Cinematic Universe, with Hayley Atwell's Peggy making an appearance alongside the Howling Commandos of *Captain America: The First Avenger* in opening episode 'Shadows'. Her own spin-off show is expected to air sometime in early 2015, and it would be reasonable to expect more *SHIELD* crossovers further down the line.

Executive producer Jeffrey Bell believes that the show's new direction opens up many intriguing possibilities. "It allows us to tell stories where we're the underdog," he says. "It allows us to tell stories more in the vein of what it would have been like when SHIELD was first created – more *Men In Black* and not officially out there. Having to sneak in and sneak out, and really becoming more of a genuine spy show. The Triskelion used to be SHIELD, and SHIELD has been dismantled. Coulson is director. Great. What does that mean? Does he have 12 people, 120 people or 120,000 people? Exploring that is something we're going to do."

One of the side-effects of this exploration will be the uncovering of new characters. Following on from the appearances of comic-book favourites like Deathlok and Lorelei, Season Two will introduce us to the likes of Mockingbird (Adrianne Palicki), a sometime-Avenger in the comics, and Carl 'Crusher' Creel, aka the Absorbing Man (Brian Patrick Wade), a powerful adversary with ties to Thor.

Other notable new faces include SHIELD agent Isabelle Hartley (Lucy Lawless), a ally of Coulson who returns from being undercover; Lance Hunter (Nick Blood), a member of STRIKE – the British SHIELD equivalent – who works alongside Hartley, and most intriguingly of all, *Twin Peaks* star Kyle Maclachlan, whose role is a secret at present, but is rumoured to be that of Skye's father, the mysterious blood-soaked man we glimpsed at the end of Season Two.

The changes that have come to *Agents Of SHIELD* were part of the plan from the very beginning, which posed quite the creative challenge considering the show debuted about six months prior to the release of *The Winter Soldier*.

"When we pitched it to ABC," explains Tancharoen, "[executive producer and series co-creator] Joss Whedon said, 'There's a script coming up that you need to read. You may be shocked.' So we went into the season accordingly. We had to avoid saying the 'H' word, we had to avoid anything that would indicate what was coming. It was a challenge, though we were able to plant seeds throughout the first half of the season, and paid it off toward the end."

"The biggest thing we weren't allowed to do was have traitors," adds Jed Whedon. "In a spy show, the most obvious plotline is 'Who can we trust?' And we weren't really allowed to play with that early on. After the reveal, of course, we played with it a lot, and will continue to do so. Especially the idea that Coulson and his people have to work with people who they don't necessarily feel comfortable with. The big question becomes 'Who can you trust, who is HYDRA, and who is SHIELD?'"

Now, the show has become even more inextricably connected with the overall Marvel Cinematic Universe, which for writers

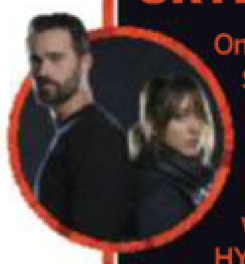
• This page clockwise from top left: Hail HYDRA!; Director Vincent Misiano gets in on the action; Adrian Pasdar returns as Brigadier General Glenn Talbot in Season Two.
• Opposite page clockwise from top: The new line-up includes Agent Triplett (BJ Britt) and Ward's Beard of Evil; Hayley Atwell as the lead for *Agent Carter*; David Patrick Wade stars as Carl Creel.







SKYE & WARD – SHIELD'S DYSFUNCTIONAL COUPLE



One of the strongest elements of Season One was the evolution of the relationship between Agent Grant Ward and Skye, which was totally ripped asunder when Ward's true colours as a HYDRA agent were revealed.

It was a genuinely shocking moment, which is perhaps why it's so difficult seeing the two of them sitting next to each other, smiling and laughing. Moreover, it's all the more disconcerting due to the fact that between seasons Dalton has grown a beard, which looks suspiciously like the goatee of evil (*Star Trek* fans should understand that one). They do, however, play off each other nicely.

SCIFINOW: You know, it's a little disturbing Skye, that you're still hanging out with this guy.

CHLOE BENNET: But look at how handsome he is! Truthfully, it was actually a huge shock when we found out that he was HYDRA. You get attached to these characters, and it was actually devastating [turning towards Dalton] – especially after you kissed me.

BRETT DALTON: It was a good kiss.

CB: I know! He's a good kisser. But I think in Season Two we're going to find out that Skye is a little bit darker. She's been betrayed, she was a SHIELD agent for, like, a second, and she's really going to help Coulson build SHIELD back up from the ground. Plus, we'll have some run-ins with Ward...

BD: Look, the whole world has changed. Ever since *Winter Soldier*, SHIELD as it was no longer exists. There's a new world, new threats, but it's still kind of the same. They haven't exactly killed all of HYDRA, but that requires new responses as well, and we've got a new director.

There will be a new leader of HYDRA. Will Ward be loyal to him as well?

BD: I feel the alliance has been more to John Garrett (Bill Paxton) than HYDRA. He's done some good things and some bad things, and that's the stuff of Season Two – figuring out who this guy is.

Can he be redeemed?

BD: It's a good question. We've been asked some iteration of that, and I really don't know. Maybe he has to go to Africa and helps build a village or something...

CB: He has to dig, like, 60 wells [again, to Dalton]. When was it revealed to you that you were HYDRA?

BD: Basically the episode before.

CB: That's what I mean, so you really weren't playing the character evil...

BD: I don't even agree with 'evil'. I don't think he's a villain; I think he's an anti-hero. He's done some questionable things.

CB: In my opinion he was manipulated by Garrett. He was a young boy, and he had no other option; he was taken from juvie and thrown into this situation. I'm not sure how anyone else would have reacted. I have to tell you, I still believe in Skye/Ward. I really do think he's good deep below the Nazi murderer thing. [To Dalton] Down there you're a good guy! I do think it's going to take some time to find that.



> THIS IS ALL BECAUSE JON FAVREAU OFFERED ME THREE LINES IN IRON MAN. HOW DID THAT BECOME ALL OF THIS?
> CLARK GREGG

PHIL COULSON: DIRECTOR OF SHIELD

Actor Clark Gregg seems to be as aware as you are that when you have about two minutes to chat, you've got to put it all out there – and quickly.

"I had so much fun in Season One," he enthuses, "especially with the crossover with *Captain America*, and then Nick Fury showing up in my hour of need and handing me my beautiful Destroyer gun. I could have died on the spot right there. And then, two days later, being in my own room on the 'bus' [jet] and being made the director of SHIELD, I was kind of like, 'This is all because Jon Favreau offered me three lines in *Iron Man*. How did that become all of this?'

"That said, time has passed, everyone in the world seems to want to arrest Phil Coulson, SHIELD is on the run, Fury made me the president of a country that no longer exists, and now we have to make it better and not so riddled with evil traitors."

Coulson, of course, was last seen covering a wall with hand-drawn alien symbols due to the extraterrestrial means used to resurrect him from his death at the hands of Loki in *Avengers Assemble*, but outside of that seems to have quickly come to grips with his new position. Within that, he's also patched up his differences with Agent May (Ming-Na Wen)... maybe.

"But he knows now that she was keeping secrets from him, because she was tasked with being the plug-puller if all of the side effects described in that operation performed on him start to manifest themselves in Coulson," Gregg notes. "She's supposed to put him down."





must be both an exciting and terrifying prospect. The series had to lead into a $170 million film, and then out of it and, despite being a television series, still has to maintain the thrills and excitement while keeping the momentum going on a television budget.

"The nice thing," says Tancharoen, "is that we got to deal with that giant event on a very personal level – the emotional consequences of the big HYDRA reveal."

At the same time, Whedon concedes, "The disadvantage we have from the films is that they have bazillions of dollars and all the time in the world. At the same time, we do have 22 episodes to tell our story, so we get to have those events hit us in the heart on a much more personal level. To tell the story of that infiltration in a way you wouldn't have time for in a film, with our team actually turning inwards and looking at each other with suspicion. The only way we can try and live in the same world as these giant films is to feature compelling characters and keep it very personal. Initially, they faced these external threats, but then the threat was among themselves."

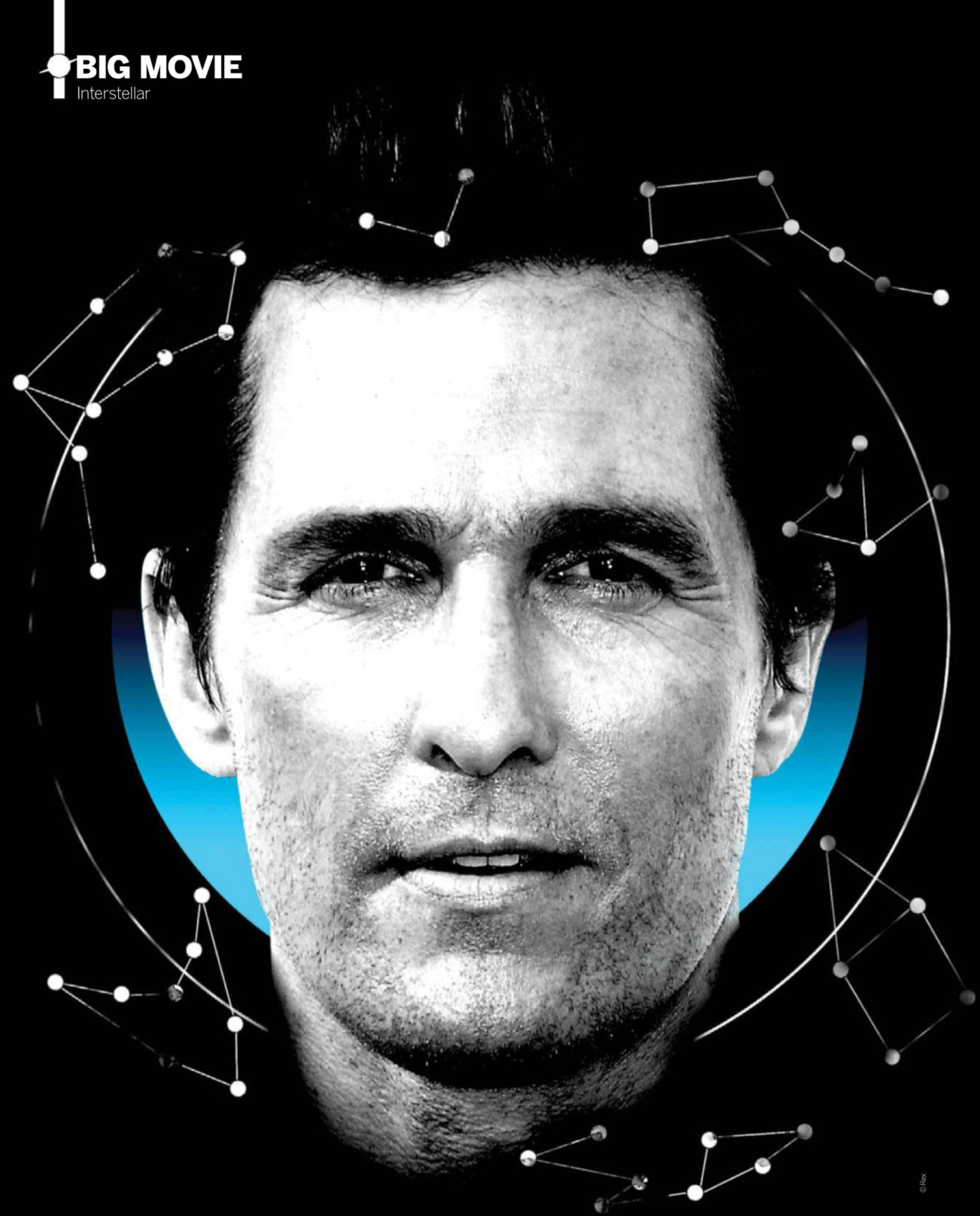
Tancharoen opines, "It was also a nice sort of tension to play someone like Skye as the outsider coming into the team. All of them were strangers, and over the course of the season we sort of built their bond. Right when we felt that things were gelling, we tore it all apart. We revealed a wolf among them, which is the drama that has played out and will continue to play out."

As things continue, both Tancharoen and Whedon are enjoying the fact that the show holds a firm position within the Marvel universe, though they admit that it doesn't necessarily make things easier for them.

"It's funny," she smiles, "because as much as we'd like to claim to be unbridled and carefree, there are still many restrictions. This is Marvel, and with Marvel it's like a big puzzle that every part has to fit in. There are certain things we can't mention or touch at this point, as well as things that we can. When we can, it's very exciting. But there are rules, a structure and an overall outline of how we lay out the universe over time."

Closes Whedon with a laugh, "Existing in the same universe gives you these great opportunities, but it's also hyper-complicated."

Agents Of SHIELD will air on Channel 5 in the UK later this year.



© Rex

Inside Christopher Nolan's space odyssey

INTERSTELLAR

How Christopher Nolan invoked the spirit of sci-fi's greatest movies for his latest epic voyage

WORDS **JONATHAN HATFULL**

If one director has defined the modern adult blockbuster, it's Christopher Nolan. No filmmaker has inspired the kind of fierce, unwavering devotion from the art house to the multiplex that he enjoys. His work and process have shown a willingness to push the boundaries of modern filmmaking technology while keeping a steadfast commitment to the techniques of the medium's giants. *Interstellar*, a science-fiction epic invoking the spirit of Spielberg and Kubrick, is a huge next step for Nolan in every possible sense.

"This is a film that very much looks out," enthuses producer Emma Thomas, who has worked on every Nolan film since his 1997 short *Doodlebug* and 1998 feature debut *Following*. "Many of the films we've worked on, while they may have been epic in scale, have been very much earth-bound. It's difficult to say they've been small, but they've definitely been about individual human concerns, whereas this story is much bigger in scope. It's about the future of humanity as a whole; instead of just playing on the canvas of Earth, it literally goes into other galaxies. It's an entirely different thing for us, and that was very appealing."

A lack of scope and ambition is certainly not something you can accuse Nolan of. Think of the concurrently operating dreamscapes in *Inception*, the determination to shoot sequences of superhero movies in IMAX, or the sheer narrative ingenuity of *The Prestige*. When Nolan's operating at his best, his films are a Sistine Chapel and a Lament Configuration puzzle box all at once. So not exactly light on ambition then, but this is a story that takes the momentum of his *Dark Knight* trilogy and *Inception* and channels it into a great running jump.

"I grew up watching films about that next step in the human story," explains writer – and brother of Christopher – Jonathan Nolan. "That bold leap out into the unknown. I hadn't really seen anything quite like that, and I hadn't seen anything quite like that in some time. It was 2007 when I was hired to write this film, and that moment did not feel like a terribly optimistic moment. I wanted to write something that had a strong thread of optimism running through it about humanity, grounded hopefully in a realistic assessment of the difficulty of space travel and the difficulties of existence, the unlikeliness of life in the universe, but with a thread of optimism that ran through it in terms of what makes us human and where the next chapter in our story will take us."

It doesn't come as a huge surprise that this pitch for an optimistic, epic sci-fi film about the triumph of humanity first landed in the hands of Steven Spielberg. The master filmmaker was attached for some time, but eventually left the project, at which point the Nolan brothers decided that it was the perfect opportunity for another collaboration. Indeed, Thomas tells us that Jonathan's script had piqued his brother's interest from the get-go.

"Yeah, we knew he was working on it. It was all super-secret, but we knew that he was. I think the first time we spoke to Paramount about it was actually before we went and made *The Dark Knight Rises*, and Chris expressed an interest then. When he finished that we started thinking about what he wanted to do next. He had been developing his own ideas for a space film and at that point, when we finished *The Dark Knight Rises* and started really thinking about what the next project was, he felt like there was a world in which he could meld those two ideas together, Jonah's script with his ideas. So we went into Paramount and pitched them on the rough sense of what Chris was to bring to the project, and luckily for us they liked the idea! They trusted us to go off and make it work. When Chris started writing on it, that was the moment where it really became a Chris movie."

The announcement that the brothers Nolan would be collaborating once more made a huge amount of sense to fans like us, and Jonathan tells us that the process was exactly as natural as you'd have thought. "I've never worked on anything, and I don't think Chris has ever worked on anything that we haven't run past each other at a very early stage," reveals Nolan. "He's been a great first reader for me on everything I've ever worked on; *Interstellar* was no different. As I was developing the script originally for Steven, I would be »»

BIG MOVIE
Interstellar

talking to Chris often, and I could tell he was sort of developing something. We were both dabbling in a universe that we were both very interested in. So it seemed like the most natural thing in the world to make it with Chris."

What they were both interested in was science fiction on an epic scale – a journey into the stars that took their ambition to the next level. The announcement kept things vague, pitching a real event movie involving wormhole technology and alternate dimensions. *Interstellar* finds Earth facing the last throes of its existence, with dust storms ravaging the planet and resources running out. There is one last hope for humanity: a spectacular voyage through wormholes to find a planet that can sustain us, but there's no guarantee of success, or even a return. Our hero is Cooper (Matthew McConaughey), a former pilot who is the first and only choice to pilot such a terrifying mission. He must leave his family behind to undertake the most important journey in our history.







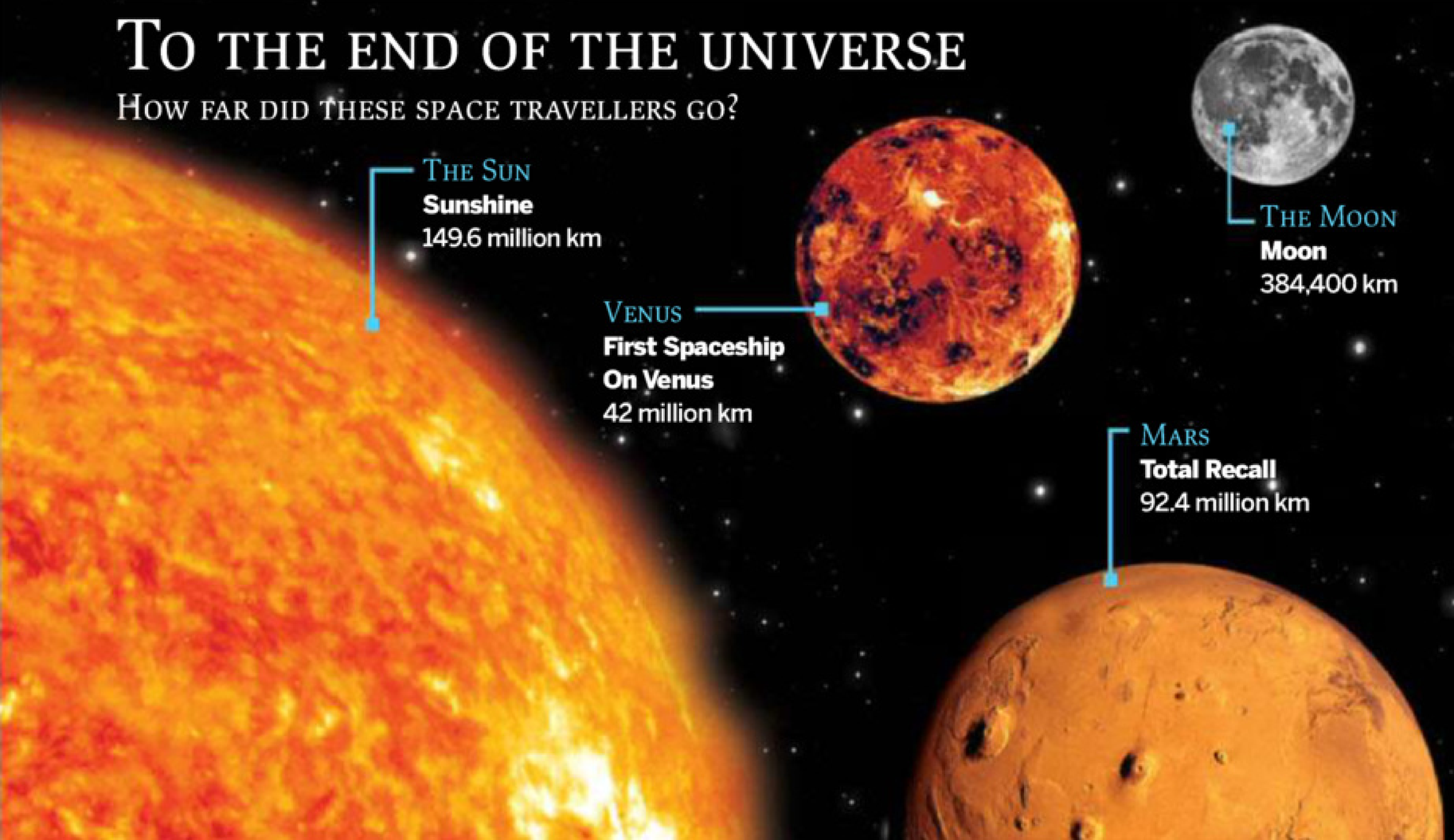
ROOTED IN AMERICA'S HEARTLAND (THE FACT THAT COOPER IS LIVING ON A FARM WHEN THE film starts feels none-more-Spielberg-ian) with an everyman hero facing the incredible unknown, there's a distinct and deliberate feel of classic Hollywood about *Interstellar*. "I grew up watching films like *Close Encounters Of The Third Kind*, which hint at that adventure, but does so from an Earth-bound perspective, or films like *Alien*," Nolan explains. "*Alien* is probably one of the first films that I remember watching and dissecting as a film experience, *2001* same thing. I grew up with an older brother, so I was exposed to films that were far too adult for my age! But *Alien* and *2001* and films of that ilk, the idea of the pure science fiction, the pure age of exploration in space movie was always terribly appealing."

We've seen a lot of that love for the classics in some of the best lower-budget sci-fi from filmmakers like Gareth Edwards, Duncan Jones and Neill Blomkamp, but *Interstellar* might be the biggest film yet to look both forwards and back. Naturally, Nolan's name is enough to send the internet into a tizzy of excitement, but the massive impact of each successive trailer suggests that there's love for these movies in the mainstream too. "I think there is. I guess we'll see!" Thomas tells us. "We'll see how people respond. What we wanted to do was make a grand space adventure, and it very much harks back to those movies that we enjoyed watching as kids. Certainly, Chris has been massively influenced by Spielberg's movies and others, I don't know, I'm certainly hoping there's a hunger for that!"

• Above, clockwise from top left: Exploring new planets; Cooper, Brand (Hathaway) and Romilly (David Gyasi) investigate; Romilly in his space suit.

TO THE END OF THE UNIVERSE

HOW FAR DID THESE SPACE TRAVELLERS GO?



INTERSTELLAR

Inside Christopher Nolan's Space Odyssey









Thomas' nerves are a little surprising given their track record, but it's hard to forget that this is a colossal endeavour. Leaving aside Nolan's love of shooting whole sequences with the enormous, expensive and impractical (but brilliant) IMAX camera, the filmmakers were determined to ensure that classic technology was used for the making of a future classic, something which Jonathan tells us is very reassuring for a screenwriter.

"I know him well, and I know how he'll tackle things," he enthuses. "There's a commitment there to tactical production rather than green-screen misadventures. So standing on the set of this film was the best of the old and the best of the new. The set would have been recognisable to filmmakers working in the last turn of the century and the middle of the century, some of the films we grew up watching, rather than a green carpet with a couple of props in it.

"A few years ago it seemed like the entire film business was barrelling in the direction of making these things in someone's backyard with green screen. I think this has a scope and scale to it... it's not an animated movie; it's a real movie. And when you stood on those sets, they were doing the digital effects first and projecting them on the set, and it's transformative. The actors are really there; you're really there. That was an extraordinary experience, so it's always a pleasure working with Chris because you know it will be realised on the best and biggest possible canvas. which is terribly exciting."

Exciting it may well be, but this commitment to practical effects must surely be somewhat unnerving to a producer. "I have to say, pre-production »»

• Above right, clockwise from top left: A glimpse of the all-important spacecraft; Anne Hathaway returns to Nolan to star as Brand; feet firmly back on earth as Christopher Nolan offers some direction.



JUST OUT OF EARTH'S ATMOSPHERE
Gravity
400 km

JUPITER
Europa Report
588 million km





NEPTUNE
Event Horizon
4.3 billion km



SATURN
Saturn 3
1.2 billion km



is never my favourite time!" laughs Thomas. "It's always the moment where you're looking at the scripts and you're terribly excited about all the ideas and the potential for what you're hoping the film will be on the big screen, but at the same time you're grappling with the realities of how you actually make it, and make it work for the money that you have. And so yes, as a producer it was a daunting task, but luckily we have a really great team, many of whom we've worked with before and some of whom were new to us. The finished film is quite a leap from what we were even visualising on the day, and it's just a much bigger movie once you see it all together!"

The confidence that *Interstellar* will be a bigger movie – in terms of box-office receipts as well as budget – than anything Nolan has made before was made clear by seeing major studios grappling over the rights to the movie. The script was set up with Spielberg at Paramount, but Warner Bros were naturally keen to stay in the Christopher Nolan business, and the rights to *Friday 13th* and a piece of *South Park* was given up, while Legendary Pictures forfeited their stake in *Batman V Superman: Dawn Of Justice* for *Interstellar*.

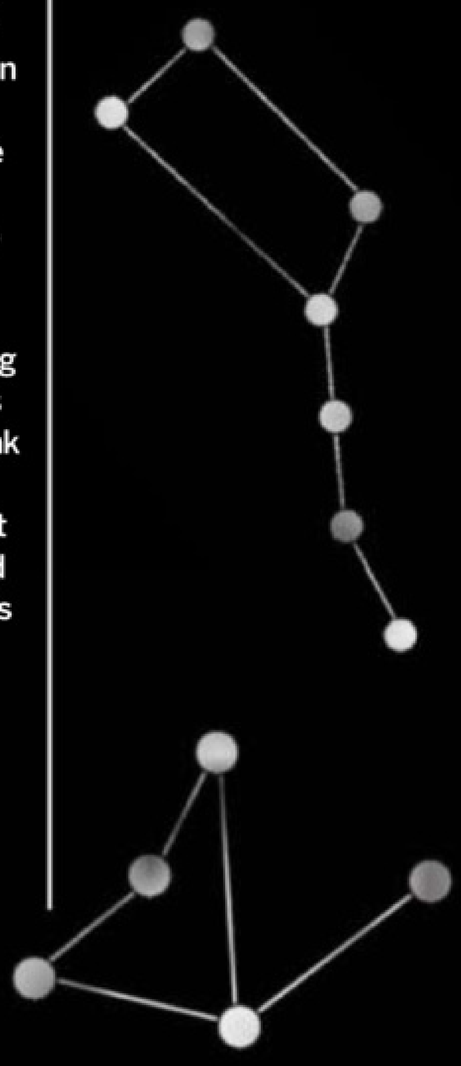
"I think we feel a bit more confident about the things we're doing than when we did *Batman Begins*, but still, making a film isn't necessarily easy," explains Thomas. "The thing that is easier is getting studios to trust us I think because we're lucky enough to have had successful movies over the last few years, and so where they might be less eager to take a risk on an original project with somebody who hasn't had that level of success, we've been incredibly lucky in that we've been able to say 'Well, we did it on this one, and we'd like to do it again', and they've trusted us."

Intriguingly, Nolan's commitment to classic film technology might well be part of the studio's willingness to let him push the envelope. "The interesting thing is that in some ways what's old is new again," Thomas tells us. "And I think that a lot of the way we shot this is actually the way that some of the great movies of the past have been shot, and though we combined all the techniques with cutting-edge technology in the digital realm, the visual effects team at DNA, and so I think the studios are always looking for something that's going to work and that's going to be something that they can sell. And the good news is that if you have an original way to do something, whether that's using technology that comes from 20 years ago in combination with something new, or if it's something entirely new, if it's something that is going to work in the finished film and it's something that they can sell I think they're happy to embrace it."

• Above: It's a thing-a-ma-bob. Technical term...

• Opposite, top: Nolan and McConaughey on set.

• Opposite, bottom: Jessica Chastain and Casey Affleck join the all-star cast



Of course, it's not just Christopher Nolan's track record that has propelled *Interstellar* through production. There's the small matter of the film's incredible cast. With the likes of Anne Hathaway, Jessica Chastain, Casey Affleck, Michael Caine, John Lithgow and Matt Damon involved, it seems like Hollywood's finest must have been hammering on Nolan's door to be cast.

"Gosh, I don't think we ever have to beat people away," demurs Thomas. "The casting process is always nail-biting because you want to make sure you're getting the right people, and it's not easy. We've been very lucky in that we've managed to get some really fantastic actors to play some in some cases fairly small roles, but I think that there's something that really distinguishes the film when you see it, because every character is – it's like the real world; every character has depth and is amazing, and we're very lucky that we've managed to have actors with some really great talent."

When it came to the role of everyman Cooper, the filmmakers knew that an actor with a special kind of quality was required. , "We were very much looking for an actor who is kind of an everyman, who can carry the audience through this pretty outlandish story," explains Thomas. "It's pretty fantastical and incredible, and there are some big ideas in the movie. We really needed somebody who as I said could bring the audience with him, and I think that Matthew is so that guy."

It wasn't just his everyman quality that led to his casting. That sense of a classic American cinema, an era of movies gone by, came to be important once again. "He just feels like an actor sprung from an earlier generation where there was a more optimistic moment in American cinema," enthuses





Nolan. "McConaughey seems to me to embody that kind of mid-century optimism of America in a way that is very rare. He's just a charming, affable, very American guy, and because the film is about a moment in the future where that means something very different and we've arrived in a kind of post-national, nationalist moment in which the nation state has simply stopped serving any function and has dropped away. That throwback sensibility was important for us to find. It's difficult to imagine anyone but McConaughey embodying that."

That perfect fit of actor to character seems to be indicative of the project as a whole. One look at *Interstellar*, and it's clear who made it, and to be honest, it doesn't seem like anyone else could have done. Spielberg's *Interstellar* might have been great, but it wouldn't have looked like this.

"Steven's a lovely person and unbelievably talented filmmaker, and it was a true privilege to sit with him and talk story," remembers Nolan. "He contributed many cool ideas to the draft that we put together, but sometimes these things come together and sometimes they don't. What's funny about the subject matter is the film is very much about these massive expensive machines and missions that for a few decades we mounted to propel us into outer space. It feels just as unlikely to get a film made as it does that you'd be able to fill an aluminium or alloy canister with explosives and then propel half a dozen people or three people up into outer space."

"Getting a film made is very difficult, and getting all the right pieces in place and getting it all together is very difficult. For me, this became a labour of love in terms of wanting to get it made and get it made with a filmmaker who could achieve the scope and the scale required. There are really only a handful of those people around, period, so the relationship for me with Chris – the ability to call on a filmmaker that talented, to just collaborate – it's just a natural fit that we would wind up making this film together."

***Interstellar* is released in cinemas 7 November.**

Dream a little bigger

Emma Thomas explains why Christopher Nolan's films won't get smaller

Given the size and scale of *Interstellar* and, if we're honest, every Christopher Nolan film since *Batman Begins*, you'd think that he and his team would be yearning to make a small, intimate family drama.

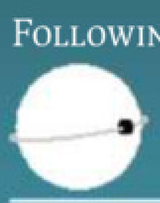
"Sometimes!" laughs Thomas. "I don't know, with this one, I think at the beginning I thought, 'Gosh, do we really want to make another really big movie?' but the truth is that it was actually really fun, and I think that when you're excited about a project and excited about the story that you're telling, you're just happy to be working on putting that story on the screen."

The studios certainly seem happy to keep giving Nolan what he needs to make these films, and Thomas explains that having that opportunity is part of what keeps these films getting bigger. "I think we'd be happy with any level of budget or size of film, it would just have to be a story that we're interested in telling. Although I will say definitely, when you know you're in a place where you can get a film financed and made, it's always good to sort of go for it, so I guess in some ways that's why we've been making bigger ones lately!"

Nolan by numbers

Key ● -budget ○ -worldwide gross

Following



Budget: $6,000
Gross: $48,482



Memento



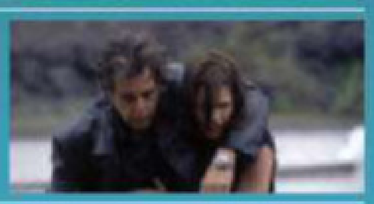
Budget: $9 million
Gross: $39,723,096



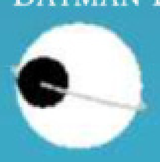
Insomnia



Budget: $46 million
Gross: $113,714,830



Batman Begins



Budget: $150 million
Gross: $374,218,673



The Prestige



Budget: $40 million
Gross: $109,676,311



The Dark Knight



Budget: $185 million
Gross: $1,004,558,444



Inception



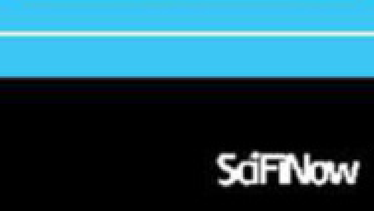
Budget: $160 million
Gross: $825,532,764



The Dark Knight Rises



Budget: $250 million
Gross: $1,084,439,099



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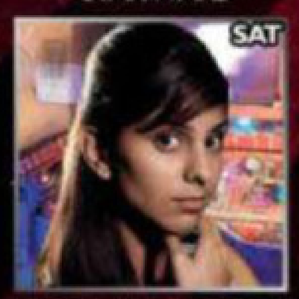
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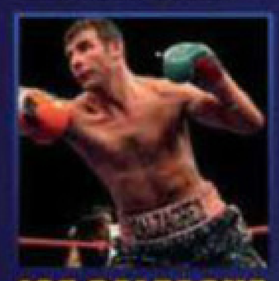
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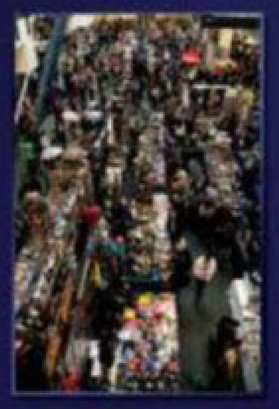
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IF IT'S IN A WORD OR IN A LOOK, YOU CAN'T GET RID OF THE BABADOOK. STAR ESSIE DAVIS TELLS US ABOUT THE SCARIEST HORROR FILM OF THE YEAR...

WORDS **JONATHAN HATFULL**

WE ALL KNOW THAT THE BEST CHILDREN'S STORIES ARE THE SCARY ONES. FROM GRIMM'S FAIRY TALES TO CORALINE, THE STORIES THAT stay with us the longest are the ones that kept us awake as children. What they're not supposed to do is scare the grown-ups reading them. Enter Jennifer Kent's *The Babadook*, a film that finds a grieving single mother at the end of her rope when her young son tells her that he's got a new book to read.

Essie Davis stars as Amelia, a woman still haunted by the death of her husband, who's struggling to cope with her son Samuel (Noah Wiseman). He is determined to protect his mother from any monsters that might come their way, and after reading *The Babadook*, his behaviour only gets worse. As Amelia is pushed to her breaking point, the question is: is Samuel right?

"It's really about the dark, about having to live with the dark side of yourself and you cannot push it down," enthuses Davis. "The more you try and deny something, the bigger and more dastardly it's going to become to come back and get you."

Assured, deeply moving and utterly terrifying, one of the truly impressive things about *The Babadook* is that it is Kent's first film as a writer-director, and Davis tells us that the script had a powerful impact on her. "Jennifer was the year ahead of me at drama school in Sydney, and we've been friends for years," she tells us. "When she asked me to read this I was quite scared by it and moved by it and bewildered by it, but I wasn't sure that I wanted to play it. I'm really glad that I did, because it's such a wonderful female character on an incredible journey. It's a very rare part."



Essie Davis faces her fears as Amelia.

Amelia is very rare indeed. She's the kind of horror-film protagonist that we don't see too often: a flawed, believable and relatable woman whose journey is as vital a part of the film as that terrifying book. "I think a lot of parents, a lot of mothers think that they do a terrible job, that they're really bad at it. And we all are muddling our way through trying to work out how to be good parents and often say the wrong thing. A lot of people also live with the fact that they don't particularly like their child. Luckily, I do!"

As Noah's behaviour worsens and the end of Amelia's rope gets nearer, strange and sinister things start happening and the relationship between mother and son becomes increasingly fraught. All her resentment and anger comes bubbling to the surface, which meant that Davis found herself going through the emotional wringer along with her character. "Well yeah, I am an actor who sort of has to be in a moment of truth in order to do my job, so it was quite a harrowing experience," she recalls. "Both in its repression of grief, and feeling that much terror is very exhausting! It was like an emotional endurance course. And also constantly caring for and looking after Noah within that experience so that he never actually directly got any dark, dark matter thrown at him."

Wiseman's performance as Samuel is superb, but playing such dark and disturbing material with a child is a bit tricky. "Yeah, complicated," says Davis. "Complicated because he needed to behave as if he felt fear, and sometimes I needed to be very threatening, I needed to be calm and cool and he needed to be really frightened." Luckily, Davis and her on-screen son formed a strong connection. "We bonded really well. It wasn't instant, but it certainly was fun, and his mum is also a phenomenal woman. She was there for the whole of it, and I guess my bond was strong with her as well, and her, Jen and I were like the three archangels over him."

The Babadook faced more than its fair share of problems during production. The budget caused a series of headaches for Kent, with extra funds for the special effects having to be raised via Kickstarter. However, the end result is something very special that we have no hesitation with putting it on our best-of-2014 list, and Davis stresses that its success is due to one person.

"I think that the reason that it is so particular and so assured is because Jennifer fought the whole way to make it hers," she says. "People wanted to compromise it at every step of the way. And I think the best directors are uncompromising in what they want. Some compromises have to be made, the budget was not very big, and we were filming in a studio, which meant that everything had to be lit, and we had a six-year-old child and a dog, so everything took a lot longer than normal. Everybody worked the final week for no pay, we were all kind of, 'Oh my god, we need more time!' And there was a lot of love and support in it, but definitely, our Jennifer was unwavering in her vision for it."

We couldn't be more thrilled that she was. This is a deeply moving horror with superb performances that will stay with you for a long time – just try to get a good night's sleep after watching it.

Babadook...dook...dook.



The Babadook will be released in UK cinemas on 24 October.

Gotham Confidential

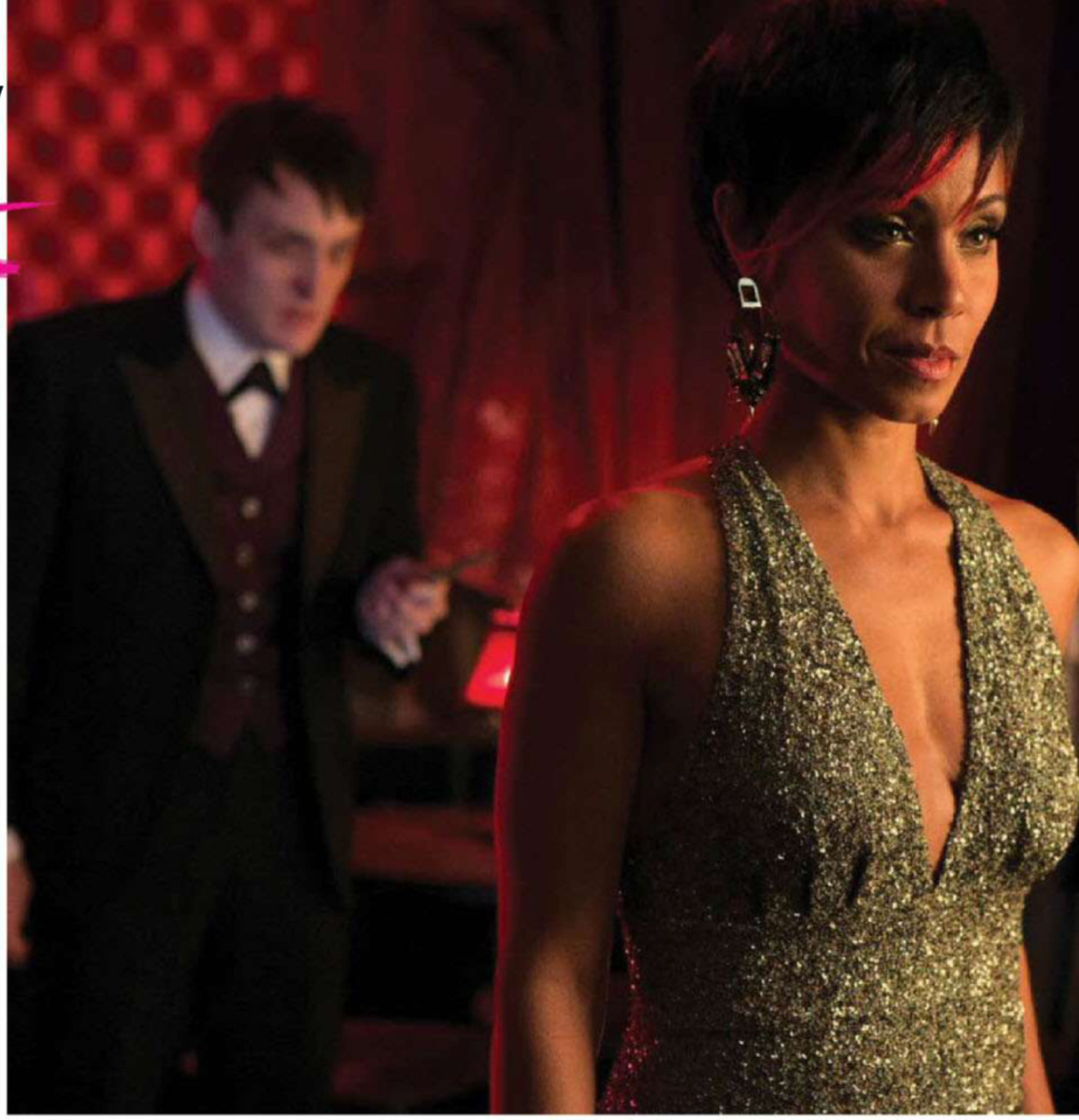
WITH LUMINARIES LIKE TIM BURTON AND CHRISTOPHER NOLAN HAVING ALREADY COMMITTED THEIR OWN ICONIC ITERATIONS OF THE DARK KNIGHT TO CELLULOID, THE PRESSURE on *Gotham* to deliver another compelling take on Batman mythos is high. However, executive producer Bruno Heller is aware of the task at hand.

"I've never really been involved with anything that had so much... weight is the wrong word, but *resonance*. It's both exciting and daunting, but great fun," he says. "But it wasn't so much the pressure that was the appeal. Instead, it was the chance to use such mythic characters. It sounds kind of crass to say this, but you're playing with house money when you're working with such resonant, great characters that so many people have done such great work with before. It has depth to it before you even start on it, and that's what attracted me to it."

Gotham kicks off with the murders of Thomas and Martha Wayne; an event that alters the life of young Bruce Wayne (David Mazouz) forever and causes him to cross paths with Detective James Gordon (Ben McKenzie). It also serves as the impetus for all that follows as Gordon fights to save the soul of Gotham, while coping with a wide array of characters who are fated to inhabit Batman's rogue's gallery and colourful extended cast... ⇨

GOTHAM REVEALS A WHOLE NEW TAKE ON THE WORLD OF DC'S DARK KNIGHT – A CITY WITHOUT BATMAN, LOST IN THE GRIP OF ORGANISED CRIME. EXECUTIVE PRODUCER **BRUNO HELLER** EXCLUSIVELY TALKS US THROUGH ONE OF COMICS' MOST ICONIC SUPPORTING CASTS AS YOU'VE NEVER SEEN THEM BEFORE...

WORDS **EDWARD GROSS**



Detective James Gordon

BEN MCKENZIE IS THE CITY'S LAST GOOD COP

"He brings real sort of manly weight," says Heller of the actor, who has previously starred in *The OC* and *Southland*, and voiced Bruce Wayne/Batman in the animated feature *Batman: Year One*. "He brings integrity, he brings old-school values; he has backbone. Perhaps in TV more than film that's needed; film, one could argue, is more of an illusion. In TV you have to get people who can embody in a real way the character traits you want to put over strongly. For Gordon, you want that kind of mythic, all-American strength, and Ben does that better than anyone, because he has those kinds of qualities.

"He'll be a different kind of Gordon than we've seen," adds Heller, "to the degree that everyone is different when they're younger, and it's very much about the journey. The fact that people know the older Gordon very well and have seen him portrayed by great actors like Gary Oldman is a very particular challenge when you're creating a younger version of people like that. On the one hand it's obviously informed by other portrayals, but you have to own the character in a different way. Otherwise, there's no journey, and the fun of that, when you have that kind of strange foreshadowing, is how do you get from A-Z? It shouldn't be, with any of these characters, a slavish imitation of the best portrayal of that character, because to a degree that's a sort of mimicry."

Alfred Pennyworth

SEAN PERTWEE IS THE LOYAL RETAINER WITH A HARDER EDGE

Growing up, there is no one closer to Bruce Wayne than the family butler Alfred Pennyworth, who becomes his guardian following the death of Bruce's parents. The character is portrayed by Sean Pertwee, most recently of the US take on Sherlock Holmes, *Elementary*, on which he played Gareth Lestrade.

Offers Heller, "We were so lucky to get Sean for this role. He sort of won it immediately on entry. He has a genuine sense of warmth. When he crosses the police line and walks towards young Bruce, I've seen him 50 or 100 times, and he gets me every time. He gets the audience every time. You need someone who can portray both a difficult, prickly and rough personality, but a caring person, a smart person, a person with very particular values. In this case, the values of a bachelor and a Royal Marine who has spent his life in service of one kind or another. Sean brings such genuine humour and warmth to the role."

Oswald Cobblepot

ROBIN LORD TAYLOR IS THE GENTLEMAN THUG WITH THE HEART OF A MONSTER

Pre-*Gotham*, the Penguin has only been brought to life on screen by Burgess Meredith and Danny DeVito, and those portrayals couldn't be more different. Now, it's Robin Lord Taylor's turn, and this version – focused on his pre-top-hat-and-umbrella days – promises to be just as unique.

"I suspect people will agree with me that if there is any sort of great 'find' in this show, it's Robin Lord Taylor," enthuses Heller. "He was completely new to me, and his performance is just a revelation. The beauty of it is that it's both a revelation *and* entirely natural. I hasten to add there are not elements of the psychotic Penguin in Robin Lord Taylor's actual character as a person, but because he's playing someone larger than life who will become the Penguin, the transformation that he has made with that character completely naturally and organically is something he really owns. You sympathise with the character and want him to succeed, but are horrified by him at the same time. It's just a fabulous portrayal by a really great young actor."

> "Harvey Bullock isn't a Sherlock Holmes kind of detective – he's Humphrey Bogart"
> Bruno Heller

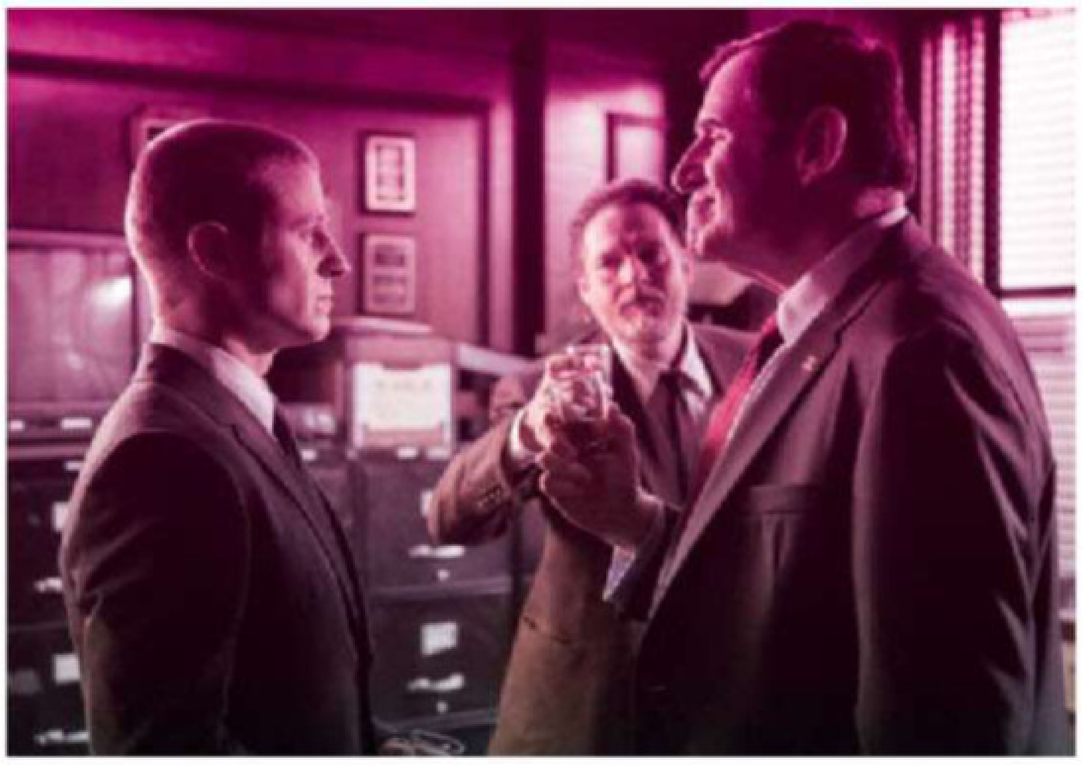
Detective Harvey Bullock

DONAL LOGUE IS THE STREETWISE COP WITH THE DIRTY BADGE

Serving as Gordon's no-nonsense and possibly corrupt partner on the GCPD is Detective Harvey Bullock, portrayed by Donal Logue, whose extensive credits include roles in films such as *Blade*, *Zodiac*, *Ghost Rider* and *Max Payne*, and shows like *Vikings* and *Sons Of Anarchy*.

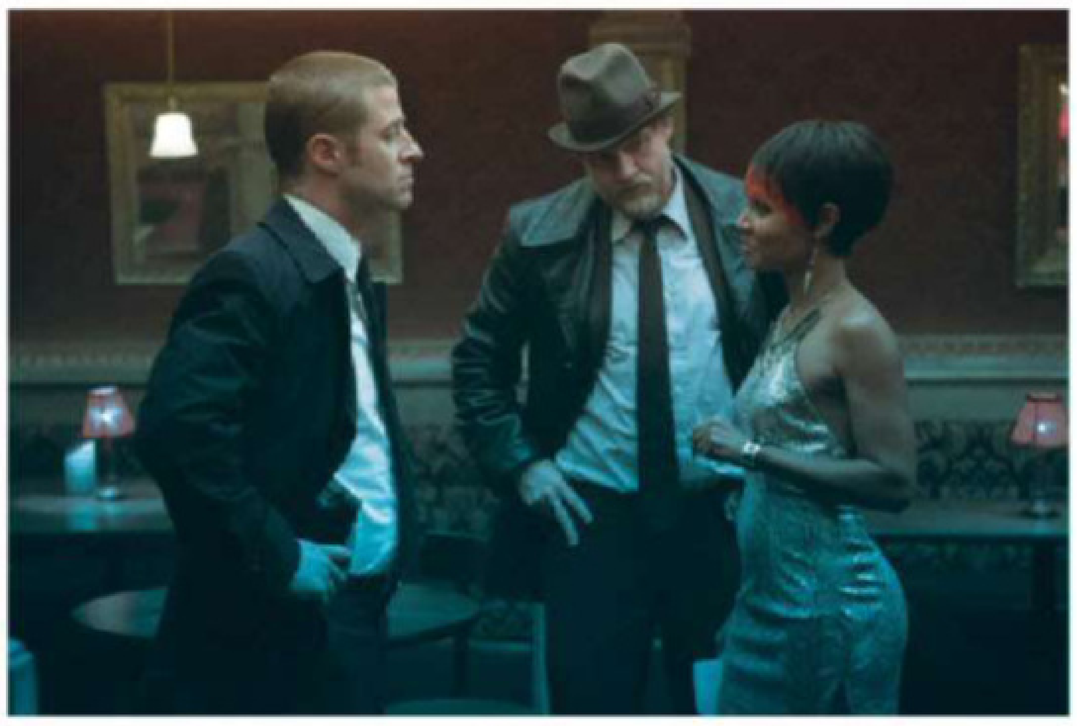
"Bullock is like an old soldier, a man with an iron heart – actually a golden heart cast in iron, I suppose – and a man of vast experience, street wisdom and hard-bitten values," Heller notes. "Donal looks like he does, but has the mind of a kind of philosopher, and real wisdom. That's what Bullock needs; a sense of cynical wisdom. It's a sort of Humphrey Bogart role, and Donal brings a great natural humour to it and a kind of understanding. He's a detective, but he's not a Sherlock Holmes kind of detective; he's a sort of Popeye Doyle [from *The French*











Connection] kind of character, so you need someone with that kind of strength, grit and worldly experience.

"The contrast," he continues, "between Bullock and Gordon will be important. They're two sides of the same coin, which is how do you uphold the law? You can uphold the law by literally upholding the law, or you can do so by bending it."

Fish Mooney

JADA PINKETT SMITH IS THE UNDERWORLD QUEEN WITH AN UNCERTAIN FUTURE

If anyone has it easier on *Gotham* in one way, it's actress Jada Pinkett Smith, whose character, Fish Mooney, is a crime lord who has been invented for the series, and is therefore completely malleable. Smith has made a name for herself in Hollywood as both as an actress and a producer.

Heller says, "The show needed some ferocious female energy, because there are so many ferocious male characters in this world. What Jada brings is a genuine capacity to convey the ferocity of the character and a great intelligence, because that's the character's superpower, if you will. A kind of manipulative, cunning, moral woman is what Fish Mooney is. Jada can convey all those complexities in a very visceral way. When these characters are going up against great characters like the Penguin, they have to have great 'pop.' That's something all the actors share; they jump off the screen in a very cinematic way. One of the great fun things about having someone as good as Jada in the role is it gives you such great potential to build the character and create fresh journeys for her."

• Opposite: Jada Pinkett Smith stars as underworld queen Fish Mooney.

• Clockwise from top left: Ben McKenzie and Donal Logue team up as Detectives James Gordon and Harvey Bullock; Carol Kane plaus the Penguin's mother, Gertrude; Robin Lord Taylor personifies the early days of the Penguin, sans top hat and umbrella; Gordon and Bullock face off with Fish Mooney.

Selina Kyle

CAMREN BICONDOVA IS THE THIEF WHO KEEPS HER CLAWS SHEATHED

Eartha Kitt, Julie Newmar, Lee Meriwether, Michelle Pfeiffer and Anne Hathaway have preceded Camren Bicondova in the role of Selina Kyle (aka Catwoman), so this young actress has got *a lot* to live up to. Heller believes she's up to the challenge.

"Selina, along with Bruce, is the youngest of the characters," he explains, "and it's always difficult to find talented people of that age. Camren immediately jumped off the screen. There was a large casting call for that role, as you can imagine, but she was perfect. She's a dancer, first of all, so has the physicality that you need for the role. Great confidence and all those sort of feline qualities she has in spades, and a certain mystery. She really has an instinctive sense of how to play the role, her first audition tape is pretty much the performance she's giving now: very natural."

The suggestion is that the relationship between Selina and Bruce will be one of the most interesting. "The story hints at that at the beginning," details Heller, "but we really get into it around episode seven."

Edward Nygma

CORY MICHAEL SMITH IS THE LAB GEEK WITH MORE QUESTIONS THAN ANSWERS

The role of Edward Nygma, the future Riddler, has gone to relative newcomer Cory Michael Smith, whose take on the character is to *very* gradually turn him into the man that has previously been played by Frank Gorshin, John Astin and Jim Carrey.

"The Riddler is one of those characters where it's very easy to underestimate or

overplay," Heller points out. "It's going to be a slow burn, because he can't turn into the Riddler yet – I'm not betraying any state secrets on what path Nygma is heading down. We're going to reveal slowly the complex and delicious depths of that character. With Cory Michael Smith we have someone who has a number of hidden depths that we're going to use. He's a brilliant, versatile, strong leading-man actor, who's playing this wonderful slow-burn character. That's going to be fun, to reveal all of his levels there."

In a quick aside, Heller notes the different actors who have played the character in the past, and locks on to Frank Gorshin's interpretation from the Sixties *Batman* TV series. "One of the challenges of doing *Batman* is that Frank Gorshin's version of the Riddler is not really a good guide for a modern portrayal of the Riddler. You have to take a fresh approach."

"The young prince," he smiles. "David is the best young actor I've ever worked with. It's very rare to get profound acting out of young actors, frankly. The stuff that I've seen David do, he embraces all of the other actors on the set with his focus and ability to kind of plumb depths of emotion. It's really uncanny; he's a really smart and deep kid with a great deal of talent. I can't say enough about him.

"Here's the thing," he continues. "Normally when you're casting a role for a kid, you have to be a little defensive in the writing before you've cast the kid. You can never tell whether you're going to get someone magical, like Jodie Foster at that age, or something perfectly fine, but not *really* what you would want. The thing about *Gotham* is that this is not a kid's show. This is an adult show; this is an adult portrayal of a child. It's for kids as well, but it's a young adult version, if you like, so until you know whether he can really deal with adult themes, and I don't mean talking about them, but being able to understand them so he can act them, you just can't be sure. David was on board. His audition tape had a scene written to test the style, and once you have a great actor in that role, you can write to it. This means the role can expand in all kinds of interesting ways."

"Frank Gorshin is not really a good guide for a modern portrayal of the Riddler"
Bruno Heller



Bruce Wayne

DAVID MAZOUZ IS THE ORPHANED HEIR ON A DARK PATH

The stand-out during casting – and perhaps the biggest surprise – was David Mazouz, seen most recently in Tim Kring's *Touch*. Heller says that the young actor's performance is so strong that Bruce Wayne's presence on the show was greatly increased from what was originally intended.

Gotham is airing now on Mondays at 9pm on Channel 5, and will be available on Netflix immediately afterwards.

Wayne's World

Inside the troubled mind of David Mazouz's future Dark Knight

A lifelong Batman fan, he views the day he found out he had won the part as one of the greatest of his life. At the age of 13, Mazouz is probably best known for the role of Jake Bohm in *Heroes* creator Tim Kring's *Touch*, in which he co-starred with Kiefer Sutherland. Coupled with guest-starring roles in television series like *Mike & Molly*, *Private Practice* and *The Office*, his star is very much on the ascendancy...

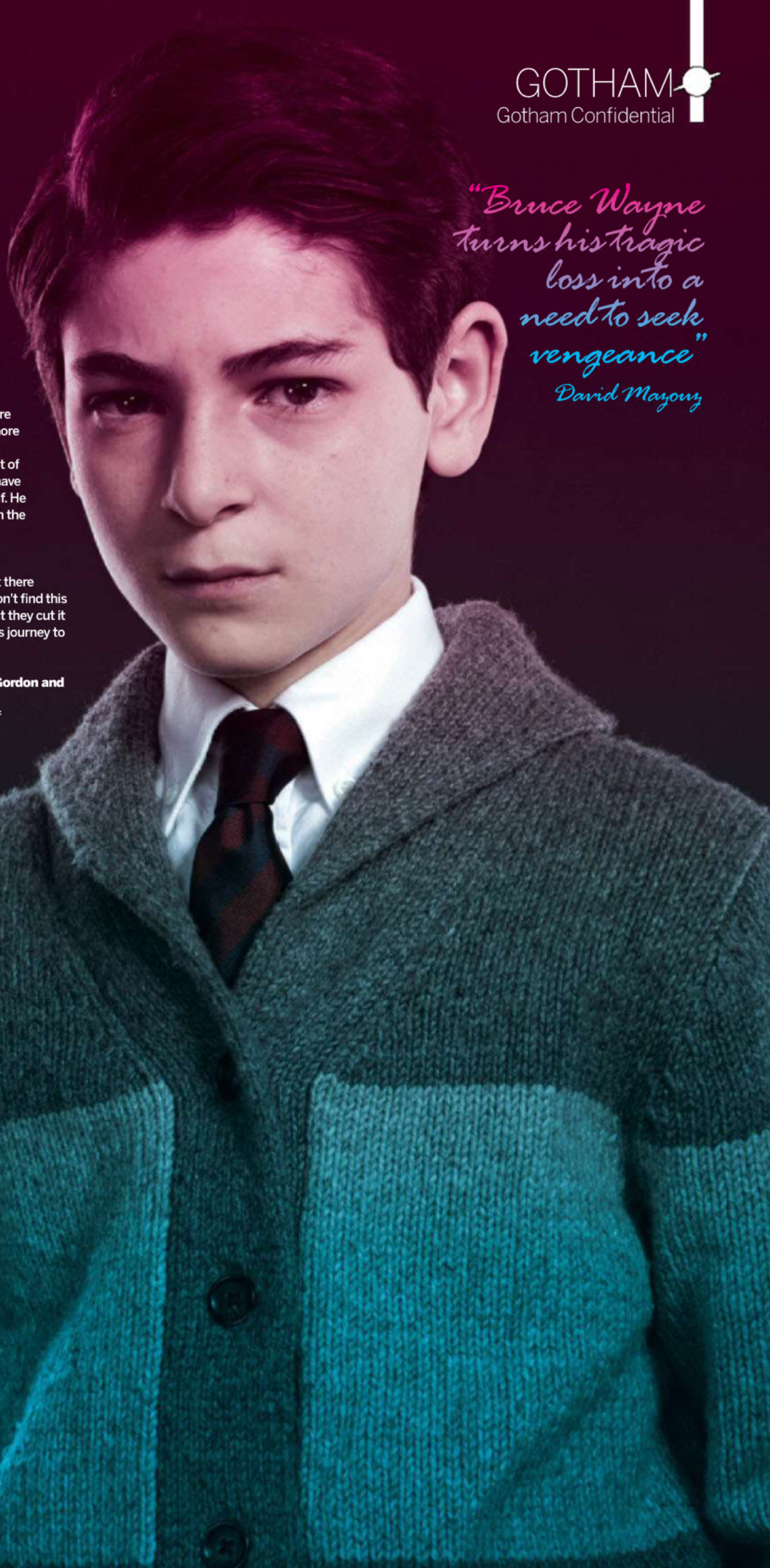
What was the audition process like?
I went in for the initial audition and met with Bruno Heller. Then they wanted me to come back and test, and I tested about four times, I think. I had to test for a lot of people – first for Warner Bros, then Fox and so on. And of course, after every test my agent would say, "You should know by tomorrow whether they want you or not," and of course, there was another test after that [laughs]. On the last one they gave me a major haircut, gelled by hair back and made me look a lot more Bruce Wayne-y. They told me what clothes to wear, and finally when I found out I got the part... actually, my mom found out first. My agents had called her, and that day my mom found out was my sister's birthday, and I got in trouble at school, so my mum didn't want to tell me. She waited until the next day, and she told me in a public place, but I still screamed as loud as I could, because it was one of the best moments of my life.

What do you think they were looking for in the audition?
They gave me the same lines for every audition. They sounded very serious and Bruce Wayne-y. They were a boy talking to some father-like figure; kind of like a therapist in a way. The lines were really serious and dark, and that's what I brought to it. Apparently, Bruno really loved what I had to offer. I took my own approach. I knew I was auditioning for Bruce Wayne, but I hadn't gotten the pilot script until I booked it, but I knew it was going to be some time around the time his parents get killed, which does happen in the pilot. I knew he would be a dark and sad sort of kid. So I didn't really ask myself what they were looking for, but more, 'What do I have to offer?' That's the thing I like to do; I like to do dark stuff.

You've used the phrase 'Bruce Wayne-y' a couple of times. What does that mean to you?
As to looks, very preppy. When I mentioned the hair, my hair is super curly and afro-like, and they cut it off for the show. Every day when I work, I have to come in about 45 minutes earlier than I should have to come in because they have to do my hair; they have to flat-iron it, and blow dry it and put gel in it and that kind of stuff. And with the clothes, they put me in these preppy clothes – I'm always wearing a Brooks brothers button-down shirt with a jacket, and that's casual for Bruce. We were shooting the pilot, and the wardrobe ladies gave me a button-down shirt and a sweater to wear, and [director] Danny Cannon sees me and says, "No, no, no, no. Bruce Wayne would never wear this. This is like wearing shorts and a T-shirt." I was literally wearing a tie, a Brooks Brothers shirt and a sweater.

In terms of acting Bruce Wayne-y, I would say at least for the first couple of episodes, I think it's just a matter of darkness and angriness and seriousness. He's also compulsive, he's searching for any meaning to his parents' death – in episode five you'll see his obsession. He hasn't gone through a total evolution in the first half of the season, which is what we've shot so far, but you'll see some changes in





"Bruce Wayne turns his tragic loss into a need to seek vengeance"
David Mazouz

his character. *That's* what I'm referring to when I say I'm acting Bruce Wayne-y.

Were you a Batman kid?
Batman's always been my favourite. First of all, he's the coolest and he's every kid's dream. Clark Kent and Superman is a little more clean-cut, goody-two-shoes. Batman always has a darker side, a more interesting and serious side. Batman was also always my favourite because he wasn't born with any superpowers. Clark Kent and a lot of the other DC heroes and all of the other heroes in general always have some sort of thing they're born with. Batman finds it within himself. He turns his tragic loss into a need to seek vengeance, and to go out in the world and save Gotham.

And in *Gotham* we're seeing the early stages of that?
You will see little hints of that. They had a line in the pilot that's not there anymore where I was talking to Gordon and I said to him, "If you don't find this guy, then we'll have to do it my way." That was an awesome line, but they cut it out. There are lines like that. You'll see little hints of him starting his journey to becoming the Caped Crusader throughout the show.

What's the difference in the relationship between Bruce and Gordon and Bruce and Alfred?
Since Alfred is his guardian, he's also Bruce's friend. I have most of my scenes with Alfred. They're a lot more comfortable with each other than Bruce is with Gordon. Bruce has a deep respect for Gordon, because as soon as they meet each other he finds out that Gordon also lost his dad very young and was also slain right before his eyes. When he hears that he develops, like I said, a respect for him. It's not as warm a relationship; more acquaintances than friends. They *are* friends, they do work together, but it's not as comfortable a relationship as he has with Alfred.

For you, what's the excitement about playing Bruce in the pre-Batman days?
It's all psychological. How did that first come to be? The Penguin, for example. You'll see his origin story quite a bit in this. You don't really see in other stuff why he's wearing a top hat and why he always has the umbrella with him. It'll answer all of these questions that people – including me – have been asking. I've always wondered about that, and this will give answers.

Bruno has said that we probably wouldn't see you in the Batman costume until the last scene of the final episode...
I have no problem with that. When I signed up for this show, I knew I wasn't auditioning for Batman, that I was auditioning for Bruce Wayne. I've seen the light and I've seen the interest of playing Bruce Wayne as opposed to Batman, and I've come to terms with it.



AN INTERVIEW WITH *SOME* VAMPIRES

THE CREATORS OF FLIGHT OF THE CONCHORDS AND EAGLE VS SHARK TELL SCIFINOW ABOUT MAKING THE ULTIMATE VAMPIRE MOCKUMENTARY...

WORDS **JONATHAN HATFULL**

MAKING A GOOD HORROR COMEDY IS A NOTORIOUSLY TRICKY BUSINESS. LUCKILY, TAIKA WAITITI AND JEMAINE CLEMENT, THE WRITERS, DIRECTORS and stars of New Zealand vampire mockumentary *What We Do In The Shadows*, knew what they were doing.

"We didn't think it was going to be scary for one minute," Waititi tells us. What it is, however, is very, very funny. The film tells the story of a group of vampires living in a flatshare in Wellington. Foppish dandy Viago (Waititi), lusty pervert Vladislav (Clement), lazy 'bad boy' Deacon (Jonathan Brugh) and the ancient, monstrous Petyr (Ben Fransham) have agreed to let a film crew document their lives.

SOMETHING FROM NOTHING

Having created a short film based on improvised interviews with flat-sharing vampires, Clement and Waititi wanted to take the concept further.

Taika Watiti: I think we just wanted to try and do a documentary about something that you couldn't do a documentary about.
Jemaine Clement: Taika wanted to do that and I wanted to make a vampire film. The first one was just called *Interviews With Some Vampires*.
TW: Most characters just came out of the exercises that we did as a short film. So I did the interviews first and that character kind of popped out. Johnny, who plays Deacon, was really sick at the time, so he did his interview lying on the couch, and he became the laid-back, lazy, rebel vampire. The only real option after that was for Jemaine to play the Dracula-style one.

VAMPING UP

For Clement, it represented the culmination of a childhood dream. "I did a show at my high school in New Zealand, and I really wanted to play the Dracula part, but I got the Igor part," he remembers. Just how deep did they go into creating their characters' back stories?

TW: I never really thought about it. I never had any idea what country we were from; we were just making up the names of countries that don't exist – really thinking on our feet.
JC: Whenever I thought [filming] was coming up, I would start mumbling to myself in an accent, trying to find an accent. Our first version was such a reality-show thing. Definitely a bit of the History Channel, just the worst documentaries. The way they dramatise an oil painting.
TW: Someone writing by candlelight. [American accent] "It would be the last letter he ever wrote... The letter would not arrive."
JC: "Dear sir, it has come to my attention..."

WHAT WE DO IN THE SHADOWS

An Interview With Some Vampires

SERIOUSLY FUNNY

While Clement is best known for his comedy output, Waititi's work has been a bit darker, with dramas like *Boy* and *Eagle Vs Shark*. *What We Do In The Shadows* gave him the opportunity to go broader.

TW: Yeah, it was definitely going to be broader than anything I've ever done with my film stuff.
JC: I was worried for Taika that he was just going to do dramas. His shorts are quite dramatic.
TW: He's worried that I was just going to keep doing award-winning stuff. It was great because we filmed it with our friends, just hanging out and telling jokes.
JC: And also floating around on wires, and there was the rotating room where they're running up the walls. Taika and I tested that out – that's such great fun running around in it.
TW: And seeing the crew being like, "Is this the only reason they made us build this, so they could play on it?"
JC: We were on it for ages.
TW: "Does it look like we're on the ceiling, guys?"
JC: We were so excited that day.

HOMETOWN PRIDE

Setting the film in Wellington roots the film in the Peter Jackson New Zealand horror tradition, which Waititi and Clement tell us has a lot of advantages.

TW: I think it was important to us to set it in New Zealand. Auckland is almost now like a big city, it feels like a big city and it might just feel like we tried to make it in a big city, but what we got was Auckland. Whereas if you just go to a tiny, boring city like Wellington...
JC: All the film people are in Wellington. Our movie's like a parasite from the Peter Jackson movies.
TW: We just used all the stuff they were throwing away, including their crew.
JC: A lot of our set is literally built from rubbish from *The Hobbit*. Literally. I'm not even misusing that word.

MURRAY? PRESENT.

Flight Of The Conchords fans will be thrilled to hear that Rhys Darby, who played the band's manager Murray, appears in a scene-stealing cameo

TW: Yeah, we always wanted to put him in as something; we weren't really sure whether he was going to be a cop or a werewolf.
JC: I don't think I'd accept him as a vampire [laughs]. We were happy when we thought of putting him in that part, because we originally thought of it as being quite a blokey big guy, quite an intimidating guy at first, then we just thought, "May as well get someone really funny." He's an improvising machine.

SCENE-STEALER

One of the film's funniest characters is the deadpan IT guy Stu, played by Stuart Rutherford in an incredible performance. However, we were shocked to discover that Rutherford isn't a trained actor.

JC: We didn't tell him that he had a main part because we didn't want him to do acting lessons and stuff. We let him think he would just be in the background, because he is an IT guy. So we let him think that he was mainly there to help in the office.
TW: He was a runner on *Eagle Vs Shark*, and then he was production assistant on *Boy*. He thought he was just going to do that job again.
JC: He's great because he does his IT job, which is literally the job he's describing with the maps.
TW: And when we were doing pre-production before we even started he was actually there helping out with all the technical stuff in the office with the router and printers!
JC: He's getting lots of people who do his job going, "You might be the only GO database analyst on a film ever!" There was a lot of excitement within that very small and specific technological realm.

BLOOD FEAST

As we all know, you can't make a vampire film without spilling some blood. In one of the film's most memorable scenes, an attempt to get a victim's blood on the newspaper on the floor goes wrong.

TW: That was pretty fun. I enjoyed doing that. One of my favourite *Monty Python* scenes is that knight who gets his limbs chopped off. It's the funniest thing, and it's also really disturbing when you think about it, because it's this constant blood, so that reminded me of that.
JC: It's disturbing though with ours, because she's dying.
TW: Yeah, when you break it down, I've just taken a woman home and murdered her.
JC: You are trying to make it nice for her.
TW: I think if it was any of the other characters it would be more disturbing, because my one's kind of jolly. You need characters like mine for the conflict, because otherwise they're all into slaves and orgies.
JC: So boring. [laughs]

What We Do In The Shadows will be released in cinemas on 21 November.



WORDS **JONATHAN HATFULL**

ANNE RICE TELLS **SCIFINOW** ABOUT RESURRECTING LESTAT, BRINGING GLAMOUR BACK TO THE GENRE AND WHY VAMPIRES NEVER DIE...

Queen of the Damned

ANNE RICE
Queen Of The Damned

THE VAMPIRE GENRE HAS A FEW TRUE LEGENDS. THERE'S BRAM STOKER'S COUNT, OF COURSE, SHERIDAN LE FANU'S CARMILLA, FW MURNAU'S NOSFERATU and Stephen King's Barlow from *Salem's Lot*. For legions of fans, however, the most iconic will always be Lestat, the sharp-tongued, impulsive and gloriously elegant creation of the great Anne Rice.

It's been 11 years since Rice told her last Lestat story with *Blood Canticle*, and even longer since the dapper bloodsucker's most recent appearance on the big screen in *Queen Of The Damned*. But now, he has been revived. The author has returned to her best-loved character with *Prince Lestat*, the first in a planned new series, and the rights to the *Vampire Chronicles* saga have been bought by Universal, who are actively developing a new movie series.

"You could say he came back to me," Rice tells us. "I started to think about him, what he was doing, because he's a character that's always extremely real to me. I think of him without any effort as being out there in the world – as existing, as carrying on, and so I started to think of all kinds of new possibilities."

The character's enforced absence from the world of cinema, which he surely would not approve of, proved similarly important to the creation of his new story. "I was looking forward to his being on the big screen," Rice enthuses. "From 2005 on I had been in talks and negotiations about that, and when just year after year passed without him having a new incarnation in television or film, I began to think more and more about my relationship with him, and my capacity to bring him back if I wanted to bring him back. I started to read all the old books in the *Chronicles*, and he began to talk to me again."

Lestat de Lioncourt is undoubtedly the series' fiercely shining star, driving Rice's ten-book *Vampire Chronicles* series to its incredible success, but the hero of Rice's first novel, 1976's *Interview With The Vampire* – filmed beautifully in 1994 by Neil Jordan – was the kindly, soulful and heartbroken Louis de Pointe du Lac. "I was totally unaware," Rice admits when we ask if she always knew Lestat's importance. "I identified completely with Louis, and I never thought about Lestat. He was my introduction to the fact that a character can develop in the corner of your eye, who can take over your imagination. My focus always was Louis, but by the time I had finished the book, I had finished with Louis. All of my desires to return to the *Chronicles* focused on Lestat, this person that I felt was not fairly dealt with by Louis. I wanted to explore the way Lestat saw himself and how he came to be that antagonist. By the time I had finished the second book, *The Vampire Lestat* (1985), he was without question the hero of my dreams; he was the one I wanted to write about, and he was the one with whom I identified."

It wasn't just Rice who found herself bewitched by the character. Lestat and his vampire clan of tortured lovers and violent aesthetes came to define a kind of elegance – a mournful romanticism that created a sub-genre and its own culture. So much of what we think of as Goth culture, and the movies, books and TV shows that sprung from it, owes a debt to her work. "I've enjoyed seeing a lot of what people have done with the concept of the vampire," Rice tells us.

"Since I saw myself as retired from it, I really enjoyed it without worrying about my own writing. So I felt liberated to enjoy *True Blood* and to read Charlaine Harris's books, and I was very happy for Stephenie Meyer for her success with *Twilight* – I'm amused by all of it and interested in all of it. I do think that the popularity of the vampire is driven by authors. It's a matter of creative vision. If we hadn't had Stephenie Meyer, Poppy Z Brite, Laurell K Hamilton, Charlaine Harris, maybe we would not have had this craze."

Naturally, creator-driven fiction encourages a very special kind of fandom. Rice's standing in the genre community remains as fearsome as it ever was, but the work of authors like Meyer and Harris inspires readers to leap to the defence of their favourite characters while 'proper' fans rage about sparkly teens. "Well, every vampire writer is going to make up his or her own cosmology, and that is part of the fun of doing it," Rice explains. "I certainly made up my cosmology, and I didn't feel at all bound or beholden to anybody's. I took what interested me and added new things and eventually created an entire origin story for my vampires. Of course, there are going to be readers out there who are going to argue – in a fight would Lestat be able to beat up Edward, whatever – and it's fun to talk about all that stuff. I don't take it terribly seriously. Different characters are loved by different people, and obviously some people are going to have their very best favourites, and I understand all that. Writers are never really in competition with each other,

• **Below: Neil Jordan's successful adaptation of Anne Rice's *Interview With The Vampire* helped popularise the *Vampire Chronicles* series.**



Blood lines

How your favourite movie and TV vampires owe a huge debt to Anne Rice

Key

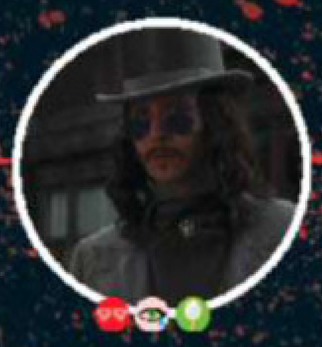
Romantic vampires · Tortured souls · Vampire hierarchy · Southern gothic · Pop culture fascination · Beautiful creatures · Forever young





Nadja (1994)

Dracula's daughter drifts around Brooklyn in a lovely coat to a soundtrack by Portishead and My Bloody Valentine in Michael Almereyda's black and white curio.



Bram Stoker's Dracula (1992)

Coppola's gorgeous film presented the Count as a tortured romantic victim condemned to a life he did not choose, with Van Helsing as a bloodthirsty killer.



Near Dark (1987)

While Kathryn Bigelow's rowdy band of violent killers superficially have nothing in common with Rice's, the vampire child Homer is a riff on *Interview*'s Claudia.



Fright Night (1985)

Tom Holland's cult classic pitches an elegant, dapper vampire into suburbia, as Chris Sarandon's Jerry Dandridge fixes his eyes on nosy neighbour Charlie Brewster.



The Hunger (1983)

Catherine Deneuve, David Bowie, Susan Sarandon, soft-focus, Bauhaus. Total Goth elegance that played a huge part in the subculture's growth.



Buffy The Vampire Slayer (1997-2003)

Acknowledges its debt to Rice by poking fun at her, before turning Angel and Spike into increasingly tortured romantics.



Blade (1998)

At first glance, the Wesley Snipes action horror has nothing in common, but the vampire hierarchy owes Rice a lot.



Let The Right One In (2008)

The young vampire Eli, desperate for human contact and trapped in a child's body forever, owes a huge debt to *Interview*'s Claudia.



True Blood (2008-14)

Lashings of Southern Gothic and an increasingly labyrinthine vampire political system, although there's a lot more sexin' going on in Bon Temps.



Twilight (2008)

Edward holds off on consummating his love for Bella for Mormon reasons, but Rice's influence weighs heavy, particularly with the ancient Volturi.



Only Lovers Left Alive (2013)

Tom Hiddleston and Tilda Swinton play beautiful centuries-old lovers who spend the film talking about the planet, society and music. None more Rice.



The Originals (2013-)

This *Vampire Diaries* spin-off relocated to New Orleans, focusing on the deeply Lestat-y Klaus: Impulsive, violent, selfish and misunderstood. Hmm.



Byzantium (2012)

Interview With The Vampire director brought Gothic glamour to the film of Moira Buffini's play, and Saoirse Ronan is a bit like a more grown-up Claudia.



The Vampire Diaries (2009-)

Rice's influence is most clearly felt in the series' love for flashbacks, as the creators are forever dressing up their leads in period costume.



Thirst (2009)

Park Chan-wook turned *Therese Raquin* into a vampire story, as a priest wrestles with his vampirism and lust for his friend's wife.



there's room for all of it. The success of Stephenie Meyer doesn't take anything away from Charlaine Harris. There's enough room for everybody to get their vampires out there."

While it seems like the craze might be less ferocious these days, we're still very much living in the age of the vampire. But to even call it a craze would be to ignore the fact that bloodsuckers have never really gone away, and they never will; there's simply too much to explore. "Oh, absolutely," enthuses Rice. "I think the concept is so rich that it can be unpacked in all kinds of ways. The vampire is a powerful metaphor for the human being. We're all vampires in a way, we're immortal in our mind, and yet our bodies are mortal, and the vampire faces that dilemma in a huge and glamorous fashion, so he's a powerful metaphor for each person: the monster inside of us, the predator inside of us, the ruthless person who makes ruthless decisions in order to prosper. I think we're enthralled with that, and I've always been in love with the glamorous side of this that I inherited from Hollywood, from movies like *Dracula's Daughter*, that the vampires could be very refined, cultured individuals with great sensitivity and great capacity for suffering. And what is it like when somebody like that becomes immortal and has to kill people to prosper?"

IT'S THAT INCREDIBLE SENSE OF GLAMOUR THAT SEEMS TO BE MISSING FROM MODERN VAMPS. WHETHER IT'S BILL COMPTON, EDWARD CULLEN OR DAMON SALVATORE, these modern creatures are handsome, moody and occasionally dangerous, but all of them would look uncomfortable in Rice's velvet at a table with Armand and company. "I do think there's a gap," Rice tells us. "I do think that other vampire writers have so domesticated the vampire that they have moved away from the glamour. Much as I loved *True Blood*, the vampires there are not glamorous per se. It's a domestication of them; they become the guy down the street at the local bar. And the same in *Twilight*; he's the boy next door, whereas in my world there is always the emphasis on the glamour, the mystic hero, the larger than life; the James Bond of the vampires. That's how I see Lestat. I mean, he's the gorgeous guy in the velvet coat who can talk slang one minute and dance with you to Mozart the next; the glamorous, powerful, deadly hero. I do think kids want that glamour, I know they come to me for it."

"When this news came out that Universal had acquired the books, we saw articles that put up pictures of Tom Cruise and Brad Pitt from Neil Jordan's brilliant movie: they're wearing gorgeous velvet clothes, they have gorgeous hair, they have gorgeous eyes and skin, and the pictures are glamorous. So clearly this is something that people associate with my work, and that Neil Jordan's movie wonderfully, wonderfully spread the word and amplified, and yeah, kids want this. They long for that glamour."

Luckily, fans won't have to wait too much longer for it. *Prince Lestat* will be released at the end of this month, and is the start of a new series of books focused on the character and his friends. "It's a big book in terms of scope," she tells us. "It's about the whole tribe, it's about what they're all doing. I enjoyed that scope, picking them all up and trying to really get into what challenges they were facing in the world of satellite news, satellite photography, iPhones and email that are better than telepathy for communicating over thousands of miles. It's more like *Queen Of The Damned* than any of the other books, but it's a sequel to all of them. It is like a new phase."

> **BY THE TIME I HAD FINISHED THE SECOND BOOK, THE VAMPIRE LESTAT, HE WAS WITHOUT QUESTION THE HERO OF MY DREAMS**
> ANNE RICE

It's thrilling indeed to know that Lestat is returning to film; it's certainly about time. "Well, *Queen Of The Damned* was a failure," Rice tells us. "It was not well received, and for me it's best forgotten. It was a very disappointing movie, and it was not faithful to the books. In a sense it reversed the success of *Interview With The Vampire*." However, Rice is certainly much more positive about the prospects of this new film adaptation. "I'm very much confident," she enthuses. "I think Erica Huggins and Brian Grazer are great producers. They're really dedicated to this, and I'm very happy that my son Christopher will be working on that screenplay with them. I'm very, very optimistic about it all."

Perhaps it's not just Lestat who'll be revived. The legion of fans who fell in love with Rice's creations can't wait for him to return, and there's a whole generation of young fans who will fall for him for the first time. "I think the goth movement is largely a movement of romantics," explains Rice. "People who are very dissatisfied with the sterility of modern culture and who want something more."









• Clockwise from top left: Kirsten Dunst with Brad Pitt in *Interview With The Vampire*; Aaliyah in the maligned *Queen Of The Damned*; Stuart Townsend replaced Tom Cruise as Lestat for the sequel; Louis' role as the series' original focus looks to have been superseded by Lestat.

Prince Lestat will be released on 30 October, published by Chatto & Windus. *The Wolves Of Midwinter* will be published simultaneously in paperback by Arrow.

FROM THE PRODUCER OF *SPLICE*

JASON MOMOA

DEBUG



EVIL CAN'T BE DELETED

ON DVD & BLU-RAY
NOVEMBER 3RD

zavvi.com

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SciFiNow Reviews

Our thoughts on the pick of the entertainment releases out this month

★★★★★ Outstanding ★★★★ Thoroughly entertaining ★★★ Good but somewhat lacking ★★ Fair at best ★ Avoid as you should *Truth Or Dare*



66 CINEMA
Theatrical releases
66 Dracula Untold
67 Life After Beth
67 The Babadook
68 I Origins
68 Luna
69 The Boxtrolls

70 HOME/FILM
Films on DVD, Blu-ray and more
70 Blacula/Scream Blacula Scream
70 Godzilla
71 Afflicted
71 Oculus
71 Maleficent
72 The Cabinet Of Dr Caligari
72 You And The Night
72 See No Evil 2
73 Shivers
73 Edge Of Tomorrow
74 StageFright
74 Space Station 76
74 Leprechaun: Origins

76 HOME/TV/AUDIO
TV shows on DVD, Blu-ray and more
76 Agents Of SHIELD: Season One
76 American Horror Story: Coven
77 Red Shift
77 The Scarifyers

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TOP 10s Read our lists relating to our favourite genre shows, and give your thoughts on whether we were right

AWARD EXPLAINED THE 'MUST SEE NOW' AWARD GOES TO REVIEWS THAT SCORE FOUR STARS OR MORE...

SciFiNow Must see now!

66 DRACULA UNTOLD

"THERE IS LITTLE HERE TO PROP THIS UP AS AN ESPECIALLY NOVEL TAKE ON BRAM STOKER'S CREATION"

TRIVIA SAMANTHA BARKS WAS ORIGINALLY INTENDED TO PLAY WITCH BABA YAGA IN *DRACULA UNTOLD*, BUT WAS CUT FROM THE FILM.



FILM INFO

Released
Out now
Certificate
12
Director
Gary Shore
Screenwriters
Matt Sazama, Burk Sharpless
Cast
Luke Evans, Sarah Gadon, Dominic Cooper
Distributor
Universal Pictures
Running Time
92 mins

DRACULA UNTOLD

From Vlad to worse

Reinterpretations of an iconic character are one thing. Wholesale deck-clearing exercises in which the story of said figure is almost entirely torn up and put together again to the extent that the end result bears minimal resemblance to its original source material beyond lip service is another matter entirely. *Dracula Untold*, as it turns out, is another.

Although Vlad Tepes' history as Transylvania's mass-impaler is referenced, it is quickly pushed aside in favour of the story director Gary Shore seems more interested in telling: that of a peace-loving prince (Luke Evans). He is determined to do what it takes to safeguard his people, particularly his family: wife Mirena (Sarah Gadon) and son Ingeras (Art Parkinson, aka Rickon Stark from *Game Of Thrones*) from the forces of Turkish commander Mehmed (Dominic Cooper), even if that involves becoming what he seeks to destroy – or maybe even something worse.



For a film about a character whose evil and tragedy is common knowledge in both history and fiction, it's slightly surprising how black and white everything is presented as: Vlad effectively selling his soul and subsequently butchering large swathes of Turks is presented as fine because they're all child-capturing sadists, while his people are all peace-loving farmers – apparently Vlad impaled all those thousands by himself.

The titular role cries out for someone capable of effortlessly exhibiting the moral shades that such a character deserves; a Benedict Cumberbatch or Tom Hiddleston-type figure. Evans is likeable – too likeable, perhaps – and gives it his all, but doesn't quite sell himself either as history's ruthless warlord or fiction's most frightening foe.

The rest of the cast don't fare much better. Dominic Cooper's Mehmed is seemingly drawn straight from the stable of cardboard-cutout bad guys, and it's difficult to remember anything much about the supporting players. Gadon and Parkinson do their best with roles that require them to little more than look scared and plead, while Charles Dance elevates proceedings in his all-too-brief screen time as the agent of Vlad's transformation.

Herein lies the problem with *Dracula Untold*: for every step forward it makes, it strides a further two back. Vlad's abilities post-vampirism yield numerous possibilities and prompt a few surprising – but welcome – moments of comedy, but are wasted in the uniformly terrible battle sequences, which quickly devolve into over-stylised CGI explosions that at their lowest points defy comprehension. The final coda at least bears the hallmarks of something interesting being planned should this get the sequel it so clearly wants, but it does have the effect of making you wonder what the point of it was.

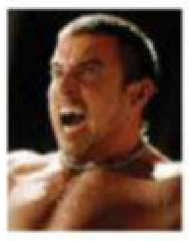
You get the feeling that with a different creative team and a new lead (we feel harsh saying this; it isn't Evans' fault he's miscast), *Dracula Untold* could have been a better film. Indeed, there are things to take away and enjoy from it. In its current state, however, there is too little here to prop this up as an especially novel take on Bram Stoker's enduring undead creation.

Steve Wright
VERDICT ★★☆☆☆



DOWN FOR THE COUNT

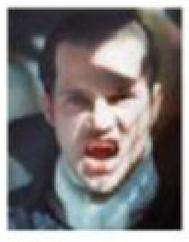
Other critical misfires involving the vampire lord.



Blade: Trinity
The movie that killed the *Blade* film series features a thinly veiled version of the Count known as 'Drake'.



Van Helsing
This awful monster mash-up sees Richard Roxburgh ham it up as 'Count Vladislaus Dracula'.



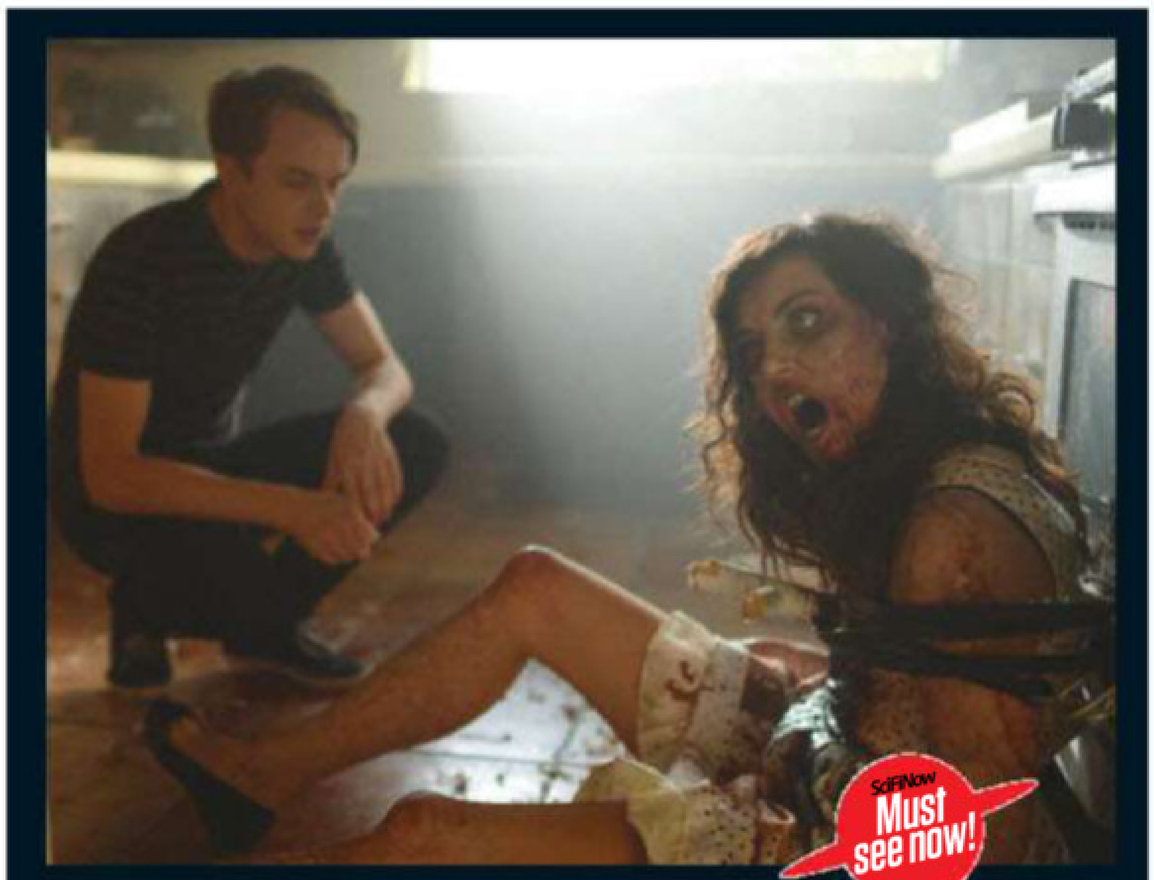
Dracula 3000
This low-budget retelling was effectively 'Dracula in Space'. It's even more stupid than it sounds.

OR STAY IN AND WATCH...



John Carter
For a bit of super-powered fantasy with less of a po-face, try this unfairly maligned thriller.

TRIVIA FUTURE *DAREDEVIL* STAR CHARLIE COX WAS SLATED TO APPEAR, BUT HAD HIS SCENE CUT.

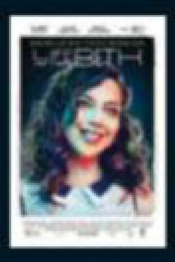


SciFiNow Must see now!

LIFE AFTER BETH

Love will tear us apart

Details 15 // 89 mins // Out now **Director** Jeff Baena **Screenwriter** Jeff Baena
Cast Aubrey Plaza, Dane DeHaan, John C Reilly, Molly Shannon
Distributor Koch Media



The rom-zom-com has played a small but integral role in the zombie revival, with plenty of horror 'comedies' forgetting that it was Shaun's relationship with Liz that gave *Shaun Of The Dead* its heart. *Life After Beth* blends its zombie gags with a spiky love story to create a winning dark comedy.

Zach (Dane DeHaan) is bereft after his girlfriend Beth (Aubrey Plaza) dies. Struggling to cope, he clings to anything that reminds him of his lost love, but on a visit to her parents' house he gets a glimpse of her. He soon learns that Beth didn't fake her death; she died and came back. Is this a miracle, or the start of something more horrifying?

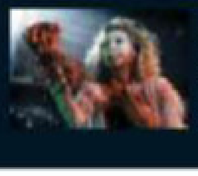
A quick glance at *Life After Beth*'s cast list is enough to reassure you that there's more to the film than its clever title. With John C Reilly, Molly Shannon, Cheryl Hines, Paul Reiser, Matthew Gray Gubler and Anna Kendrick offering support, there's enough indie and comedy credibility here alone to merit a watch. DeHaan follows his turn as *The Amazing Spider-Man 2*'s Harry Osborn with an impressive performance as a romantic lead, unafraid to play up Zach's neediness and naïveté in the face of something obviously being very wrong.

As good as the cast is, though, *Life After Beth* is very much the Aubrey Plaza show. As Zach goes through his mourning period (oddly reminiscent of Ben Braddock's listlessness in *The Graduate*), we're waiting for her to show up, and she doesn't disappoint when she does. The *Parks And Recreation* star is simply fantastic, nailing moments of throwaway weirdness ("Let's go to the attic") and Beth's sudden mood changes. She fully commits to her (often violent) transformation, making the character a force of nature without losing her humanity. As hilarious as Beth's monstrosity is, director Jeff Baena is careful not to lose sight of that.

The film's final third does take a surprisingly dark turn, but it all feels consistent. Admittedly, there are one or two niggles here and there (Kendrick seems wasted as Erica, the girl that Zach should obviously be with), but this is a sharp zom-com with some real surprises and an outstanding performance from Plaza.

Jonathan Hatfull
VERDICT ★★★★★

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



Bride Of Re-Animator
Doctors West and Cain try to reanimate the latter's fiancée in Brian Yuzna's splat-tastic sequel.

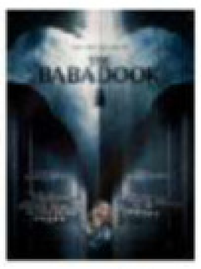


SciFiNow Must see now!

THE BABADOOK

A little terror

Details 15 // 93 mins // 24 October **Director** Jennifer Kent
Screenwriter Jennifer Kent **Cast** Essie Davis, Noah Wiseman, Daniel Henshall, Barbara West **Distributor** Icon Film Distribution



Having arrived in UK cinemas on a colossal wave of buzz and critical acclaim, *The Babadook* has certainly laid a strong claim to being one of the most eagerly anticipated horror films of 2014. You can be rest assured, as Jennifer Kent's debut more than lives up to the hype.

Single mother Amelia (Essie Davis) can't help but be reminded of her husband every time she looks at her young son; he died in a car accident driving her to the hospital to give birth. Seven years later, and she's still struggling to hold it together, as the irrepressible Samuel (Noah Wiseman) seems to be developing behavioural problems. One night, he asks her to read a new book: *The Babadook*. The terrifying story convinces Samuel that the titular monster is real, and his behaviour grows worse, pushing Amelia to breaking point – but does he have a point?

The film's trailers make *The Babadook* look like the latest boo-scary-heavy supernatural horror, and while there are certainly elements of that, it's primarily about grief, with the boogeymen a close second. It's Amelia's daily struggle to simply get by that draws us in as we see just how much strain she is under. She can't find anyone to play with her son, the school wants to assign him a monitor, and even she finds her patience tested when with him. As the film progresses, she gets more and more worn down, and watching this mother struggle to reconcile her grief and resentment towards a child who needs her time, patience and love is absolutely heartbreaking. Davis delivers a towering and immensely moving performance in the lead, while Wiseman's turn as Samuel is pitch-perfect.

That's not to say *The Babadook* isn't scary; it is. It's terrifying, and made all the more so because we become so invested in these characters. The growing sense of dread throughout is beautifully built up by Kent from the very first reading of the story ("If it's in a word, or in a look...") and is maintained as the sleep-deprived mother finds reality and subconscious increasingly beginning to blur. Drawing on the likes of *The Shining* and *A Nightmare On Elm Street*, *The Babadook* finds a strong identity all of its own, and this is a hugely impressive debut. It will break your heart and scare the life out of you in the process.

Jonathan Hatfull
VERDICT ★★★★☆

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



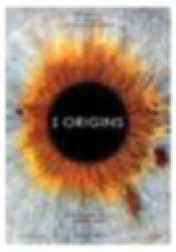
The Haunting
Is Nell Lance mad, or is there a presence in the room? This remake of a classic is still terrifying.

TRIVIA LIFE AFTER BETH'S PAUL REISER AND CHERYL HINES HAVE BOTH APPEARED IN CURB YOUR ENTHUSIASM.



I ORIGINS
Window to the soul

Details 15 // 106 mins // Out now **Director** Mike Cahill **Screenwriter** Mike Cahill **Cast** Michael Pitt, Brit Marling, Astrid Bergès-Frisbey, Steven Yeun **Distributor** Fox



Mike Cahill's debut feature *Another Earth* was hugely impressive: sharp, thought-provoking and, most of all, human. His follow-up sees him tackle another subject through a similar lens, and considers the age-old problem of science versus faith.

Ian Grey (Michael Pitt) is a PhD student of molecular biology set on disproving the idea of the Intelligent Designer once and for all, but his disbelief in the spiritual realm is shaken when he meets the stunning Sofi (Astrid Bergès-Frisbey), whose beliefs are the polar opposite of his. Fate and his work transpire to take Ian to the top of his field, but are his eyes open enough to recognise something miraculous?

I Origins settles into the same tonal groove as *Another Earth* early on, finding human warmth in a wintry setting. Cahill clearly adores shooting New York, and it's a deeply lovely backdrop for these deeply lovely characters for the film's first half. To start, *I Origins* is a fairly straightforward love story, and although its sweetness occasionally becomes treacly, Pitt and Bergès-Frisbey have great chemistry. Brit Marling (star and co-writer of *Another Earth*) also deserves praise for her turn as Ian's whip-smart lab partner.

However, this is all eight years in the past, and the time jump at the halfway point wipes the smile from the film's face and takes a step towards genre. It's here that *I Origins* wobbles, as the issues that were charming in the context of a relationship take on a portentous weight that the script can't shoulder.

This emotional sincerity, combined with gorgeous cinematography and excellent performances, make *I Origins* an easy film to make allowances for. But it's all a little too precious, and when subtlety takes a backseat as an immaculate Ian roams the streets of Delhi searching for a miracle, your higher functions may rage against it.

A beautifully shot, moving and heartfelt spiritual sci-fi with three strong lead turns, *I Origins* is a little disappointing compared to Cahill's debut, but it's certainly affecting.



Jonathan Hatfull
VERDICT ★★★☆☆

OR STAY IN AND WATCH...



Another Earth
Cahill's debut stars co-writer Brit Marling as a woman atoning for a terrible mistake who gets a second chance.



LUNA
Grief in the moonlight

Details TBC //103 mins //Out now **Director** Dave McKean **Screenwriter** Dave McKean **Cast** Dervla Kirwan, Michael Maloney, Stephanie Leonidas, Ben Daniels **Distributor** Luna Productions



Multi-talented illustrator and artist Dave McKean, who has famously teamed up with the likes of Neil Gaiman and Grant Morrison, delivers a moving deliberation on grief and loss in this experimental film, which mixes animation with live action.

Grant (Ben Daniels) and Christine (Dervla Kirwan) head to an idyllic coastal house to visit their friends for the weekend. While there, friendships are tested, dirty laundry is aired and a storm of anger erupts between the group. One couple is mourning the loss of a child, and the other dealing with the underlying tensions in their relationship. Both have issues to contend with, and McKean brings to life the inner workings of their minds via dark and beautifully detailed fantasy sequences.

The snapping of middle-class social graces is handled with a deft hand where politics and art create much heated debate. As the wine overflows so do emotions, with the egg-shells so carefully walked upon before being ground up in favour of honesty and spitefulness.

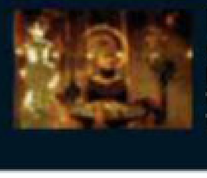
There's a potency in the tremendous artwork on display, but it's not enough to simply admire the origami crabs and pen-and-ink animations, as there's hidden meaning behind it all. Shame, insecurities and hurt are all insightfully grappled with in imagery that shifts from unsettling to soothing. The setting of the North Devon coast and an autumnal forest provides a stunning background for the ensuing drama to unfold upon.

Despite McKean's musical background (he's a talented jazz pianist), the score becomes oddly distracting at times. There's supposed to be a spikey atmosphere in the dinner party scenes, but the use of over-explanatory lyrics threaten to encroach on an otherwise perfectly gauged ambience.

With crescent moon-headed characters, the union of man with nature and feral children prowling forests, this is unmistakeably bears all of Dave McKean's hallmarks. It's a shame, then, that some of the human interactions don't ring true in this wonderfully realised scrapbook of raw emotion.

Katherine McLaughlin
VERDICT ★★★★★

OR STAY IN AND WATCH...



MirrorMask
Swedish born singer Emilia Martensson provides the melancholy vocals for the score.

TRIVIA // *I ORIGINS* IS A PREQUEL TO A SCRIPT CAHILL WROTE AFTER *ANOTHER EARTH* SIMPLY CALLED *I*



FILM INFO

Released
Out now

Certificate
PG

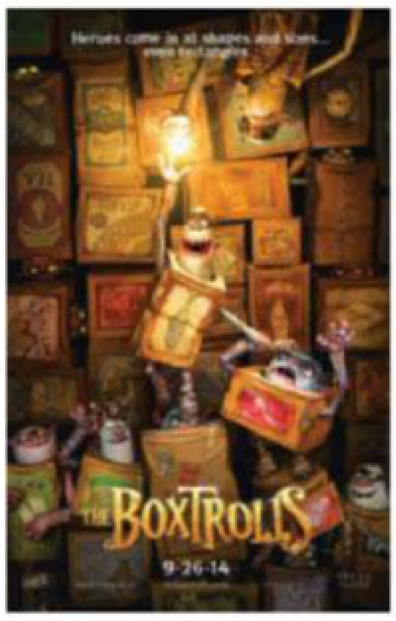
Directors
Graham Annable, Anthony Stacchi

Screenwriters
Irena Brignull, Adam Pava

Cast
Ben Kingsley, Isaac Hempstead Wright, Elle Fanning, Richard Ayoade

Distributor
Universal

Running Time
96 mins



FANTASY SURROGATES

These characters will look after you

Timon and Pumba
The Lion King
Simba's at a pretty low ebb after Scar murders his dad, but he lands on his feet when he meets Timon and Pumba. The meerkat and warthog soon give him his Hakuna-Matata back.

The Goblin King
Labyrinth
Rather than wait for a baby to come to him, David Bowie's Jareth goes out and takes one, forcing Jennifer Connelly to come looking for it. You remind me of the babe...

Jonathan and Martha Kent
Superman
It takes a lot of nerve to adopt a baby that lands in the form of a meteor, but the Kent family has what it takes to instil all-American values in their son.

Baghera and Baloo
The Jungle Book
You wouldn't have thought that a panther and a bear would be the best candidates for raising a human child, but all you need are the bear necessities.

THE BOXTROLLS

Boxing clever

SciFiNow Must see now!

With *Coraline* and *ParaNorman*, stop-motion studio Laika has delivered some of the finest animated films of the last decade, so our expectations were high for their third feature. We're delighted to report that their adaptation of Alan Snow's *Here Be Monsters!* doesn't disappoint.

The people of Cheesebridge live in fear of a subterranean menace: the Boxtrolls. Every night, these creatures emerge to steal anything that isn't nailed down – including children. Local Boxtroll hunter Archibald Snatcher (Ben Kingsley) won't let anyone forget that ten years ago they stole a baby boy, and pledges to exterminate the lot of them – provided he's allowed to join the local elite once he's finished.

However, his fear-mongering is a pack of lies; the Boxtrolls are a good-hearted bunch of master builders who take discarded odds and ends for their underground hideout. Rather than eating baby Eggs, they raised him as one of their own. The ten-year-old boy (Isaac Hempstead Wright) is shocked to discover how his foster family are perceived, and teams up with plucky Winnie (Elle Fanning) to stop Snatcher before it's too late.



There's the Dickensian aspect to the grotesque Snatcher, of course, but there's a lot of Aardman here (not just because the locals are obsessed with cheese) and plenty of Terry Gilliam's madcap weirdness. While *The Boxtrolls* may be less scary than the studio's prior work, it doesn't shy away from Snatcher's despicable nature, and puts Eggs (and the audience) through the emotional wringer. It's a stirring way to present what is, in effect, a Holocaust allegory: the importance of dispelling prejudice and the struggle to open people's eyes to what's happening around them gives the film a very strong emotional undercurrent.

In classic Grimm tradition, the parents are of no use at all: Winnie's father Lord Portley-Rind (Jared Harris) would rather invest in a gigantic wheel of brie than a children's hospital. Winnie seems to be very far down on the list of his priorities, and her frustration at his unwillingness to listen to her runs parallel to Eggs' struggle to motivate the peaceful Boxtrolls into helping themselves.

Together, Eggs and Winnie make for a fantastic duo, depending on and pushing each other, and they're perfectly voiced by Wright and Fanning. Speaking of voices, Kingsley is predictably wonderful as the oily and relentless Snatcher, who is willing to go to any lengths in his desperate pursuit for a White Hat. He's a great Dickensian villain, exhibiting more than a hint of the Child Catcher from *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*, and Kingsley proves game for some of the more outrageous moments the script has devised for him.

There's great character work beyond the three leads, too. Snatcher's henchmen fret about whether they're actually villains or not (with more great voice-work from Richard Ayoade and Nick Frost), and let's not forget the Boxtrolls themselves. The animators' work on these creatures is absolutely stunning, giving each one a distinct and rounded personality. This attention to detail and sharp sense of humour continues to prevail through the action sequences; a careful balance of glee and suspense, while Eggs' entrance to a ball is absolutely hysterical.

The Boxtrolls is yet another visual and emotional triumph for Laika, who continue to deliver beautifully crafted animation. While the story doesn't provide as many twists and turns as its best work, this is funny, moving and thrilling nonetheless.

Jonathan Hatfull
VERDICT ★★★★☆

OR STAY IN AND WATCH...



ParaNorman
No one believes that Norman can talk to ghosts, but they'd better start when the dead begin to come back to life.

TRIVIA IN THE BOOK, THE TOWN IS CALLED RATBRIDGE RATHER THAN CHEESEBRIDGE.



BLACULA/ SCREAM BLACULA SCREAM

That's Prince Mamuwalde to you

Details 15 // 93 mins/ 96 mins // 1972/1973 // Blu-ray · DVD // 27 October **Directors** William Crain/Bob Kelljan **Cast** William Marshall, Thalmus Rasulala, Pam Grier, Vonetta McGee **Distributor** Eureka Entertainment



If you've never seen *Blacula* (★★★★★) or its sequel, you could be forgiven for lumping it in with the more outrageous excesses of the Blaxploitation era of cinema, from which it and its sequel certainly sprung. Watching the films, perhaps the most striking aspect is how seriously it takes the tragedy of the central character, and that there's enough of merit to support our taking them seriously too.

The first film begins with African prince Mamuwalde visiting Count Dracula with his wife to ask the Count for his support in stopping the slave trade, only to be turned, entombed and renamed Blacula for his insolence. Several hundred years later, two interior designers raid the Castle Dracula and bring the coffin back to LA with them, only to unleash the fiend upon the city.

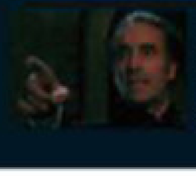
There's some great Blaxploitation staples (the club, the clothes, the useless police getting endlessly beaten up) and Thalmus Rasulala's heroic Dr Gordon Thomas is operating on another level of smoothness. This is largely due to its star William Marshall, who is absolutely superb in the title role. The Shakespearean-trained thesp plays the Count as a grieving husband desperate to reunite with his wife, taking no pleasure in the chaos he causes.

Scream Blacula Scream (★★★★★) takes what works from the first film and plays it up. Mamuwalde is resurrected by a resentful Renfield type, but instead fixes his gaze on Pam Grier's voodoo queen, who he believes can return him to his human form. Of course, his desire to be human doesn't stop him feeding and delivering beat-downs and sermons to the low-lives who try to mug him.

With a keener sense of social awareness counterbalanced by some terrific moments of humour and tension, *Scream Blacula Scream* is a superior sequel that's only let down by a slow mid-section. Elements of both films have dated quite poorly, but there's plenty to admire here, and as noted film critic and author Kim Newman points out in the bonus features, it's amazing to see how influential these films were.

Jonathan Hatfull

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



Dracula AD 1972
"The Count is back with an eye for London's hotpants... and a taste for everything."



SciFiNow Must see now!

GODZILLA

Famous monster of filmland

Details 12 // 123 mins // 2014 // Blu-ray · DVD · iTunes · blinkbox // // Out now **Director** Gareth Edwards **Cast** Aaron Taylor-Johnson, Elizabeth Olsen, Bryan Cranston, Sally Hawkins, Juliette Binoche **Distributor** Warner Home Video



Early on in *Godzilla*, Gareth Edwards' reputation as King of the Kaiju starts to unravel. It's a status he has keenly resisted, born out of the subject matter of his lo-fi debut *Monsters* and this, his major studio reboot. However, 2014's *Godzilla* has nothing to do with arguments about the respective merits of Showa-era Toho versus Heisei era, and everything to do with his childhood VHS collection.

Gareth Edwards has shot *Godzilla* like a classic disaster film – its characters mere fixed points through which we observe. The reveal of the creatures is pure Spielberg, cribbing evenly from *Jaws* to *Jurassic Park* as vast monstrosities are slowly teased by cameras panning up and out through smoke and jungle, reflections in the plastic face-plates of biohazard suits and snatched glimpses by flare-light.



The high billing of *Breaking Bad* powerhouse Bryan Cranston as nuclear engineer Joe Brody leaves a fairly bitter taste given his lack of screen time, and his good-guy son Ford (*Avengers: Age Of Ultron*'s Aaron Taylor-Johnson) fares far better than generic working mom daughter-in-law Elle (*Ultron* co-star Elizabeth Olsen), but to expect anything more by way of an arc is to remain somehow ignorant of who the main character is: the clue is in the title.

Primal and heroic – there's even something faintly adorable about his little pot-belly and chunky feet – Godzilla himself is perfectly sculpted to pay fidelity to the classic look, complete with a roar that will stir the hearts of early to mid-Nineties insomniacs tuned into Channel 4 everywhere. When the Big G starts wailing on his insectile adversaries you'll be air-punching with each kaiju grapple and grinning like a loon at the gnarly spectacle of his atomic breath.

James Hoare
VERDICT ★★★★☆

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



The Host
Is this the one where Saoirse Ronan falls in love with a Korean water monster?

TRIVIA WILLIAM MARSHALL WORKED ON THE SCRIPT FOR *BLACULA* TO DEVELOP THE CHARACTER OF MAMUWALDE INTO A DIGNIFIED TRAGIC HERO.

AFFLICTED Bite club

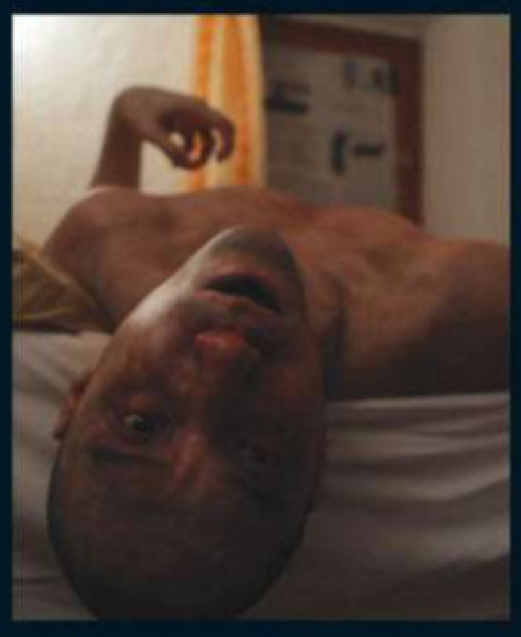
SciFiNow Must see now!

Details 18 // 85 mins // 2013 // DVD · iTunes · Amazon // **Released** Out now
Directors Derek Lee, Clif Prowse **Cast** Derek Lee, Clif Prowse, Michael Gill, Jason Lee **Distributor** Momentum Pictures



Perhaps the best vampire film since *Let The Right One In*, *Afflicted* is framed as a slickly edited travel vlog by two friends on a jaunt around Europe, with filmmakers Derek Lee and Clif Prowse effectively playing themselves. They're an instantly likeable pair, and their holiday feels like a real thing, as opposed to the perfunctory postcard scene setting that kicks off entries to the post-*Straw Dogs* 'Americans abroad' (they're Canadian, anyway) sub-genre. As a result, when events take a turn for the *American Werewolf In London*, we care deeply.

Derek's sudden onset of super strength, stamina and healing quickly come with a price – projectile vomiting, fits, his skin blistering in the sun and a tell-tale craving for blood – until he loses control



altogether, kicking off a series of frantic body-cam action scenes where he ploughs into armed police and scrambles across rooftops. And yet despite the breakneck pacing of its second half, it's as terrifying and heartbreaking as it is exhilarating.

James Hoare
VERDICT ★★★★★

OCULUS Seeing is believing

SciFiNow Must see now!

Details 15 // 103 mins // 2013 // · DVD · iTunes · blinkbox // **Released** Out now **Director** Mike Flanagan **Cast** Karen Gillan, Brenton Thwaites, Rory Cochrane, Katee Sackhoff **Distributor** Warner Bros



Oculus is an inspired blend of 1980's *The Shining* (the malignant influence of a mirror causes two parents to unravel, turning on each other with horrific results) and 2009's *Triangle* (11 years later, rehabilitated son and obsessive daughter try to expose the mirror's secrets, only to be caught in a nightmare that has them chewing down on light bulbs in lieu of apples and reliving the traumatic events of their childhood).

Director Mike Flanagan offers up a masterclass in tension, weaving a nerve-shredding tale that dances from past to present, reaching nerve-shredding crescendos in concert. It's not just that Karen Gillan (*Doctor Who*) is sharing screen time with lukewarm Ken doll Brenton Thwaites (*The Giver*) that brings her to the fore. She's sublime, deftly batting aside any memories of Amy Pond as the darkly driven Kaylie Russell – a rare story engine with her own fierce agency and not just a dumbly shrieking victim.



If anything, it's Thwaites who plays scream queen – his sad-eyed Tim pleading and watching. It's not addressed, but he's probably a virgin too...

James Hoare
VERDICT ★★★★★



MALEFICENT Woman in black

Details PG // 97 mins // 2014 // · DVD · iTunes · blinkbox // **Released** Out now
Director Robert Stromberg **Cast** Angelina Jolie, Elle Fanning, Sharlto Copley, Sam Riley
Distributor Walt Disney Studios



Another Disney classic gets a makeover, but this time it's the villain's turn for a happily-ever-after ending. Angelina Jolie dons horns and cheekbones as Maleficent of *Sleeping Beauty* fame, self-proclaimed Mistress of all evil and arguably one of Disney's scariest villains. *Maleficent* is a reworking of the 1959 film, but it isn't simply *Sleeping Beauty* from another angle; her story is given a new middle chapter, which results in a new ending and buckets of emotional depth.

We join the story at the very beginning. Maleficent is a young fairy and the Protector of the Moors of a beautiful and idyllic fairy-tale land. She's friends with the trees and the woodland creatures, and still has a zest for life. She meets a boy called Stefan from the nearby kingdom, and quickly falls in love with him.

This isn't a 'dancing with my love in the moonlight' kind of film. Some scenes are genuinely disturbing:



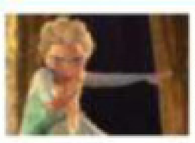
Maleficent's path of revenge and destruction is triggered near the start when Stefan cuts off her wings while she sleeps. Upon waking, she finds herself alone with bloody stumps on her back where her wings used to be. Jolie's performance easily creates one of the most distressing crying scenes ever depicted in a Disney film. The harrowing connotations between Maleficent losing her wings and female genital mutilation make it stay with you long after it's over.

Feminist subtext leaks into the rest of the film from there. Thankfully, it gets brighter and more positive. It's very easy to root for the villain when you are exposed to their back story, but in this instance you don't have to feel guilty. Maleficent isn't an unhinged psychopath consumed with a need to smite; she knows where her head is.

The themes are pretty dark for what is essentially a kids' film – abuse, redemption, greed – but mixed with lighter moments and Jolie's fantastic performance, *Maleficent* makes for engaging, if slightly odd, viewing.

Poppy-Jay Palmer
VERDICT ★★★☆☆

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



Frozen
Another Disney hit, it's just as feminist and magical, but with songs and a talking snowman.

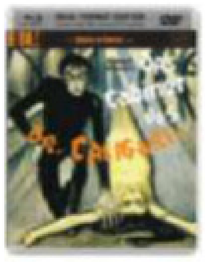
TRIVIA ANGELINA JOLIE'S PROSTHETICS AND MAKE-UP IN *MALEFICENT* WERE INSPIRED BY LADY GAGA'S LOOK ON THE COVER FOR HER ALBUM *BORN THIS WAY*.

THE CABINET OF DR CALIGARI

SciFiNow Must see now!

Wake in fright

Details U //77 mins //1920 // Blu-ray · DVD // **Released** Out now **Director** Robert Wiene
Cast Conrad Veidt, Werner Krauss, Friedrich Fehér, Lil Dagover **Distributor** Eureka



There are a few films that can truly be described as genre-defining, but Robert Wiene's 1920 masterpiece is one of them. This surreal, nightmarish and gloriously vivid horror paved the way for a whole Gothic movement, and its influence can still be felt today.

Although the story begins with our hero Francis (Friedrich Fehér) sitting on what looks like a normal park bench, the real setting of the story is the incredible village of Holstenwall. As created by designer Hermann Warm and artists Walter Reimann and Walter Röhrig, it's a stunning world of stark contrasts between light and dark and impossible angles that both hem the characters in and seem to stretch on forever. The style has almost cosy, nostalgic connotations now, after we've witnessed it in animated films from Tim Burton and Henry Selick, but the otherworldly, nightmarish quality escalates as the film goes on, and pays off in spectacular fashion at the film's climax.

Francis's story is about how he and his friend Alan (Hans Heinrich von Twardowski), both hoping to win the heart of the lovely Jane (Lil Dagover), go to the carnival to see the mysterious Dr Caligari (Werner Krauss) and his somnambulist Cesare (Conrad Veidt). Caligari claims Cesare can see the future, but when Alan asks what how long he has left before he dies, the sleepwalker responds that he will die tonight. Sure enough, Alan is murdered on that very night, but how is Cesare involved, and who exactly is Dr Caligari?

The central story, heavily influenced by the mysteries of Edgar Allan Poe,



is extremely well told and beautifully brought to life by Wiene. It's impossible to overstate the sinister, dreamlike atmosphere that the film creates, especially once we're introduced to the mysterious Cesare. Veidt's iconic performance is utterly unnerving: he's sleek and graceful, but those eyes are heartbreaking and haunted.

This *Masters Of Cinema* restoration is absolutely fantastic, giving this truly remarkable film the treatment it deserves. A true visual feast and a deeply unnerving tale of psychological terror, this remains one of the finest horror films ever made.

Jonathan Hatfull
VERDICT ★★★★★

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



Vampyr
Carl Theodor Dreyer's 1932 vampire classic oozes atmosphere and packs some ghoulish shocks.

YOU AND THE NIGHT

SciFiNow Must see now!

Only lovers left alive

Details 18 //98 mins // 2014 // Blu-ray · DVD // **Released** 10 November
Director Yann Gonzalez **Cast** Kate Moran, Niels Schneider, Éric Cantona, Béatrice Dalle **Distributor** Pecadillo Pictures



You And The Night is a film that can be sold on pitch alone: a beautiful and magical surrealist story of an orgy that stars Éric Cantona and Béatrice Dalle, inspired by the likes of Francois Ozon and Pedro Almodóvar, with music by M83.

Ali (Kate Moran), her lover Matthias (Niels Schneider) and their "maid or whatever" Udo (Nicolas Maury) are waiting for their guests to arrive for the evening's orgy: The Stud (Cantona), The Star (Fabienne Babe), The Slut (Julie Brémond) and The Teen (Alain Fabien Delon). Each comes with their own set of baggage, and this night will see them form a special connection.

The sexuality is frank and funny rather than confrontational; a vital element in what proves to be a hugely stylish meditation on love and sexuality. The strange and magical history of the three hosts is complemented by the tender and sharp revelations from their guests.

Moving, hilarious, outrageous and utterly beguiling, *You And The Night* is a gloriously surreal and open-hearted experience.

Jonathan Hatfull
VERDICT ★★★★☆



SEE NO EVIL 2

Citizen Kane

Details 18 //90 mins // 2014 // DVD // **Released** Out now
Directors Jen Soska, Sylvia Soska **Cast** Glenn Jacobs, Danielle Harris, Katharine Isabelle **Distributor** Lionsgate Home Entertainment



The Soska Sisters follow their brilliant low-budget horror *American Mary* with WWE's slasher sequel. Set immediately after the events of the first film, Jacob Goodnight (Glenn 'Kane' Jacobs)'s corpse is wheeled into the morgue where Amy (Danielle Harris) is celebrating her birthday with her friends. But Jacob's not dead yet, and he's more than ready to punish these sinners.

The original *See No Evil* wasn't hugely impressive, and this follow-up is certainly an improvement. The Soskas get to show off their skill behind the camera, making the most of the creepy setting, recalling the 1981 *Halloween II* and Ole Bornedal's *Nightwatch*. There are strong female characters played by genre vets Harris and Katharine Isabelle, but ultimately the hulking Jacob doesn't convince as a truly scary villain, and the lack of gore makes that a real problem for this slasher throwback.

It's got its moments, and kudos to the twins for delivering elegance over schlock, but it's a shame that the material can't support it.

Jonathan Hatfull
VERDICT ★★☆☆☆



TRIVIA FRITZ LANG WAS ORIGINALLY INTENDED TO DIRECT THE CABINET OF DR CALIGARI.

SHIVERS

The hosts with the most

Details 18 // 87 mins // 1975 // Blu-ray // **Released** Out now
Director David Cronenberg **Cast** Paul Hampton, Lynn Lowry, Barbara Steel, Alan Migicovsky **Distributor** Arrow Films



David Cronenberg seems to be at a point in his career where we feel comfortable dividing his work into phases, and some fans bemoan his apparent move into respectability (ignoring the provocative social satire and dark comedy), longing for a return to his body-horror roots. While the King of Venereal Horror may never make another film that inspires 'Ban this sick filth' placards, his early films remain just as potent and very much an important part of his body of work.

Shivers (or *They Came From Within*) was Cronenberg's first real feature-length movie, and saw him explode onto the booming genre scene in a wave of controversy, outrage and awe. It's a Ballard-ian tale of a self-sufficient apartment block that is infested by parasitic worms that turn the infected into sex-crazed maniacs. Can Dr Roger St Luc (Paul Hampton) get out of the building before it's too late?

So many of the key elements of Cronenberg's work can be found here: there's the sly social satire, as these pampered residents find their safe spaces compromised, and these well-to-do folk are transformed into ravening leches. There's the battle of the consciousnesses, as the individual finds him or herself overpowered by the brutally strong hive mind. And, most importantly, there is the human betrayed by the human body. Watching Alan Migicovsky's Nicholas communicate with the creature in his stomach is horrifying.

Some aspects haven't dated quite as well – the de rigeur exploitation elements, for example – and it doesn't hit the intellectual or emotional high notes of his later masterpieces. Still, *Shivers* packs an incredible punch, with a chilling sense of dread coupled with its transgressive thrills. It's out to shock and make an impression, but Cronenberg's fierce intelligence is very much in evidence.

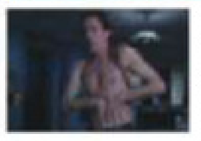
This excellent Blu-ray boast some strong extras, the pick of which is a new doc involving hilariously honest interviews with special effects supervisor Joe Blasco, Lynn Lowry, Migicovksy and the great Barbara Steele.

Jonathan Hatfull
VERDICT ★★★★☆

SciFiNow Must see now!



IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



Videodrome
Hail the new flesh as Cronenberg pushes James Woods into a hypnotic body-horror transformation.

EDGE OF TOMORROW

Living in the moment

Details 12 // 113 mins // 2014 // Blu-ray • DVD // **Released** Out now
Director Doug Liman **Cast** Tom Cruise, Emily Blunt, Brendan Gleeson
Distributor Warner Home Video



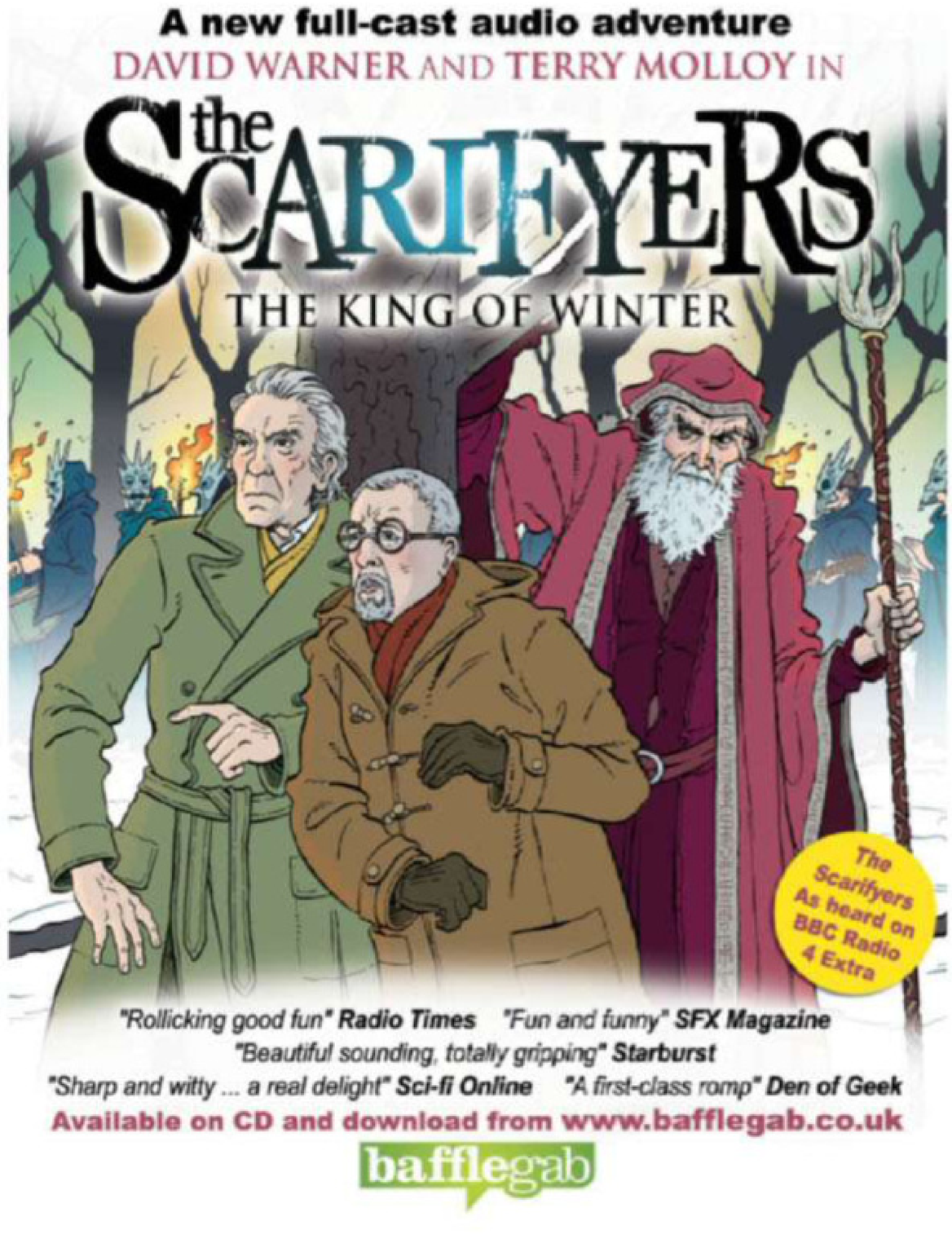
One of the year's surprise hits, the latest Tom Cruise action vehicle crams a surprising amount of wit and ingenuity into its run time, despite a plot that seems ripped alternately straight from *Source Code* and *Groundhog Day*.

However, despite being far better than it has any right to be, it isn't fully worthy of the 'action flick par excellence' title that many have ascribed to it. Tom Cruise is as game as always, but he fails to sell his character's transformation from reluctant soldier to omniscient killing machine, while Emily Blunt struggles to provide a fully fleshed-out individual in a script that only has eyes for Cruise. Some of the supporting players fare better – notably Bill Paxton as a scenery-chewing army officer – although faced with an enemy that is utterly devoid of personality, chewing scenery is all there is to do.



Still, with a script that elevates proceedings above its superficially seen-it-all-before premise, *Edge Of Tomorrow* is certainly worth a watch.

Steve Wright
VERDICT ★★★☆☆

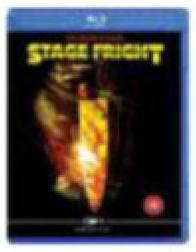




STAGEFRIGHT

Break a leg

Details 18 // 90 mins // 1987 // Blu-ray // **Released** Out now **Director** Michele Soavi
Cast Barbara Cupisti, John Morghen, David Brandon **Distributor** Exposure Cinema



Deftly pitched between the surreal artifice of giallo and the popcorn-munching thrills of the Eighties slasher boom, 1987's *StageFright* (alternately released as *StageFright: Aquarius*, *Soundstage Massacre* and, er, *Bloody Bird*) is an underrated and overlooked gem from the creatively fertile death rattle of the classic Italian horror era.

The debut feature from Michele Soavi (*Dellamorte Dellamore*), *Stagefright* is clearly influenced by his mentor, as a theatre troupe working on a serial-killer musical find themselves locked in and picked off by their own owl-headed central character – escaped lunatic Irving Wallace. The most obvious reference point is the labyrinthine structure of Dario Argento's *The Bird With The Crystal Plumage*, but *StageFright* is in turn cribbed from films depicting the tyranny of open space like John Carpenter's *Assault On Precinct 13* and *Halloween*.

Also visible in Soavi's lurid palette are as key conceits from Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* and *Dial M For Murder*, and an unsettling tableau from Tobe Hooper's *Texas Chain Saw Massacre*.

The core cast are all a bunch of terrible stereotypes – bitchy gay, bitchy diva, vanilla nice lady, homely black caretaker, tyrannical director, ineffectual cops, young lovers, and lecherous financier – but they're largely terrible actors too, so it doesn't feel too much as though we're missing out.

If the movie's sense of style, angled cinematography and overpowering synth score is unmistakably Italian, its concessions to narrative reason are reassuringly American. Until the fourth-wall shattering final scene, that is...

James Hoare
VERDICT ★★★☆☆

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



Twitch Of The Death Nerve
1971's stylish slasher stems from another of Soavi's mentors – Mario Bava.

SPACE STATION 76

The Ice Storm... in space!

Details 15 // 93 mins // 2014 // DVD // **Released** Out now
Director Jack Plotnick **Cast** Patrick Wilson, Liv Tyler, Matt Bomer
Distributor Sony Pictures Home Entertainment



Jack Plotnick's *Space Station 6* combines a pastiche of Seventies sci-fi movies with a domestic drama set in that period. The result, especially given the *Garth Marenghi*-style comedy the cover promises, is disorienting, but worth sticking with.

Jessica (Liv Tyler) arrives on a space station under the command of the depressed Captain Glenn (Patrick Wilson). She catches the eye of engineer Ted (Matt Bomer), whose wife Misty (Marisa Coughlan) is hooked on antidepressants, while their daughter Sunshine (Kylie Rogers) suffers in silence.

More successful as a darkly comic drama than a sci-fi comedy, *Space Station 76*'s attempts to go for the funny bone hit as often as



they miss, but the profound sense of melancholy is oddly affecting, and you'll be surprised by how much you care by the time the obligatory disastrous Christmas party comes along. The production design is superb too, adding to the overall sense that this is all a little bit too real to be funny. Damned if we weren't on board by the time the end credits rolled, though.

Jonathan Hatfull
VERDICT ★★★☆☆

LEPRECHAUN: ORIGINS

Gold digger

Details 18 // 90 mins // 2014 // Blu-ray · DVD · iTunes · blinkbox · Netflix //
Released Out now **Director** Zach Lipovsky **Cast** Stephanie Bennett, Andrew Dunbar, Brendan Fletcher **Distributor** Lionsgate Home Entertainment



The idea of a gritty *Leprechaun* reboot is frankly so preposterous that it almost negates the efforts of the filmmakers of this Irish-set, Vancouver-filmed re-do.

A group of Americans on a visit to Ireland regret their decision to head into the countryside when they're tricked into spending the night in a cabin as bait for the titular beastie. Can they survive the night and outwit the gold-hungry creature?

Director Zach Lipovsky works hard, and his determination to elevate the film beyond another direct-to-TV schlock horror cash-in definitely comes across, but it doesn't translate into anything worthwhile. *Leprechaun: Origins* is essentially a fairly glum and doggedly grim horror flick that ends up raising unintentional giggles every time the word leprechaun is mentioned. There are some decent gore gags, but when the creature is revealed, it looks like a rather sorry knock-off of the monsters from Neil Marshall's *The Descent*. By ignoring the inherent silliness, the result is deathly dull.

Jonathan Hatfull
VERDICT ★☆☆☆☆



TRIVIA DIRECTOR MICHELE SOAVI POPS UP IN A CAMEO AS A YOUNG POLICEMAN STAKING OUT THE THEATRE.

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AGENTS OF SHIELD

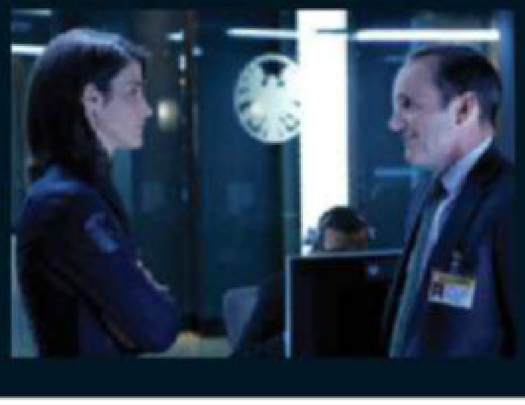
Spy hard

Details 12 // 957 mins // Blu-ray · DVD · iTunes · blinkbox // Out now **Creators** Joss Whedon, Jed Whedon, Maurissa Tancharoen **Cast** Clark Gregg, Ming-Na Wen, Chloe Bennet, Brett Dalton, Elizabeth Henstridge, Iain De Caestecker **Distributor** Walt Disney



Coming hot on the heels of mega-success *Avengers Assemble* and boasting a somehow-resurrected Agent Phil Coulson (Clark Gregg) at the head of its ensemble, the Joss Whedon-produced *Agents Of SHIELD* had everything going for it.

However, following the reasonably solid pilot, things went awry. Coulson aside, the first half of the season is disappointingly flat, with the cast struggling to find its feet. Ward (Brett Dalton) is bland and smarmy; hacker-turned-agent Skye (Chloe Bennet) is a Whedonite-lite heroine with none of the interesting shades of Buffy, and 'comedy' science duo Fitz and Simmons (Iain De Caestecker and Elizabeth Henstridge) are just irritating. Combined with a succession of bland filler episodes that squander the Marvel universe's rich potential in favour of bogus-science-of-the-week escapades and a pointless crossover with *Thor: The Dark World*, and it's fair to say that things don't get off to the best start.



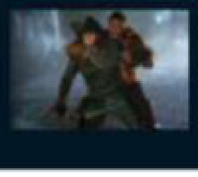
However, episode 16 'End Of The Beginning' marks the point where things finally start to kick into gear, transforming overnight into a genuinely gripping espionage thriller in which everyone's allegiances come under question. The introduction of new characters John Garrett (Bill Paxton) and Triplett (BJ Britt) definitely helps in this regard, as does HYDRA showing up as adversaries in 'Turn Turn Turn', which turns the game-changing events of *Captain America: The Winter Soldier* to its own advantage.

By finale 'Beginning Of The End', it becomes an entirely different proposition: the world of *Agents Of SHIELD* has been torn up, undoubtedly for the better. Even the cast are no longer irritating: Skye and May (Ming-Na Wen) are the ass-kicking heroines we were hoping for, and Ward becomes infinitely more interesting in the latter half of the season. Hell, we actually *cared* about Fitz-Simmons.

With a host of new characters and a promising new direction for Season Two, the future for *Agents Of SHIELD* looks bright.

Steve Wright
VERDICT ★★★★★

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



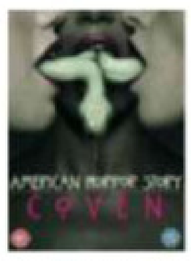
Arrow
Possesses in spades the fun that *Agents Of SHIELD* initially lacks, with comic-book references galore.



AMERICAN HORROR STORY: COVEN

Any witch way you can

Details 18 // 634 mins // Blu-ray · DVD · iTunes · **Netflix** // Out now **Creator** Ryan Murphy, Brad Falchuk **Cast** Jessica Lange, Sarah Paulson, Angela Bassett, Kathy Bates, Taissa Farmiga **Distributor** 20th Century Fox Home Entertainment



The American Horror Story formula established by Ryan Murphy and Brad Falchuk is deceptive in that there doesn't seem to be much of one at all. Each season takes a grab-bag of elements from a variety of genres, throws them together with disregard for conventional logic and gives the resulting lunacy to the stunning mostly female cast.

Coven is perhaps the least coherent season yet. Zoe (Taissa Farmiga) discovers she's a witch after accidentally killing her boyfriend mid-coitus, and is sent to Miss Robichaux's (Witch) Academy. It's run by the kindly Cordelia Foxx (Sarah Paulson), but chaos arrives with Cordelia's mother Fiona Goode (Jessica Lange), the Supreme witch, who has a fiendish agenda of her own.

Coven is about the search for the next Supreme, as the witches begin to fight tooth and claw for the privilege. This is all very watchable, especially in a show where killed doesn't mean dead and nothing is off-limits. Stir in Kathy Bates as a racist serial killer who's just been unearthed after spending hundreds of years buried alive and Angela Bassett as the centuries-old voodoo queen of New Orleans, and there's a lot of great lunacy.

The problem is that there's no spine to the story. *Asylum* drastically improved on *Murder House* by having a very strong lead (Paulson) and high stakes. *Coven* can't decide which of its witches it likes best... well, apart from Lange, who storms through proceedings with the usual, wonderful combination of glee and venom. Characters and sub-plots are picked up and dropped seemingly at random, and by the halfway point it's very difficult to really care at all, especially when it's so careless.

However, it's hard to criticise *Coven* too much when it gives us a zombie episode, Stevie Nicks musical numbers, Danny Huston as a homicidal axe-man and the still-living severed head of Bates being forced to watch *Roots*. The performances are excellent, but it's so focused on making sure that everyone involved is having the best possible time that it occasionally feels like they forgot about the audience.

Jonathan Hatfull
VERDICT ★★★☆☆

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



Bates Motel
Vera Farmiga's performance as Norma Bates is currently the only challenger to Lange's vampy greatness.

TRIVIA *COVEN* WAS THE FIRST SEASON OF *AMERICAN HORROR STORY* NOT TO FEATURE ACTORS ZACHARY QUINTO OR DYLAN MCDERMOTT.

RED SHIFT

SciFiNow Must see now!

Time after time

Details PG // 75 mins // 1978 // DVD // **Released** Out now **Creator** Alan Garner
Cast Stephen Petcher, Lesley Dunlop, Charles Bolton **Distributor** BFI



In 1978, novelist Alan Garner adapted his own novel for the BBC's *Play For Today* series with excellent results.

Directed by *The Long Good Friday*'s John Mackenzie, *Red Shift* slips through three different time periods for the stories of three troubled men, somehow bound together. There's Tom (Stephen Petcher), struggling to cope with his girlfriend moving away, Thomas (Michael Elphick), a Civil War soldier whose fits might be visions, and Macey (Andrew Byatt), a Roman soldier who flies into rages.

Garner's channels the power and history of one location into



something potent and unnerving, as these three men find themselves in need of a drastic, possibly violent change, a 'red shift'. Lovingly restored by the BFI, it has dated incredibly well, and remains unsettling and affecting.

Jonathan Hatfull
VERDICT ★★★★★

THE SCARIFYERS

SciFiNow Must see now!

In the bleak... mid summer?

Details PG // 90 mins // 2014 // **CD** · **MP3** // **Released** Out now
Creators Simon Barnard, Paul Morris **Cast** David Warner, Terry Molloy, Guy Henry
Distributor Bafflegab



The consistently entertaining and gleefully odd *Scarifyers* series continues with *The Kings Of Winter*, their ninth adventure. MI-13 agents Harry Crow (David Warner) and Professor Dunning (Terry Molloy) investigate the case of a man frozen solid in the middle of June that might be linked to a Freemasons club and some very bad acting.

There's a tremendous sense of glee running through *The King Of Winter*. It's evident that everyone involved is having a brilliant time, which translates to the listener. The back and forth between Warner and Molloy is beautifully done (the



former is particularly good as the bone-dry Crow), and there are some wonderfully written sequences with big laughs (the Mason initiation ceremony is fantastic).

Funny, twisty and a grand adventure, this is great fun.

Jonathan Hatfull
VERDICT ★★★★★

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TALISMAN

Publisher: Fantasy Flight Games //
Players: 2-6 // **RRP:** £49.99

When Robert Harris first created *Talisman* in 1983, little could he have known that his board game would go on to enchant gamers for over 30 years. And yet here we are three decades on, and the interest in *Talisman* shows no sign of diminishing.

First published by Games Workshop, *Talisman* has gone through several iterations, with the most recent being the revised fourth edition, which is currently handled by board game experts Fantasy Flight Games.

Unlike previous incarnations of *Talisman*, Fantasy Flight's version has been given a dramatic overall, so its presentation is exactly what you'd expect from the popular publisher. The cardboard figures of old have been replaced with gorgeous models, character cards are bigger and sturdier than before, and even simple things like life tokens are more pleasing to both the eye and the touch. It's all finished off with a huge and beautifully designed six-piece board, on which all the classic action takes place.

Gameplay-wise, *Talisman* is pretty simple, as you'd expect from a 30-year-old game. Players choose from a large selection of characters,

1 BOARD
The main board is huge and consists of three distinct regions. You'll need to meet specific requirements to enter the inner sections.

2 CHARACTERS
There are 14 characters in the base set: Assassin, Prophetess, Priest, Monk, Druid, Dwarf, Elf, Ghoul, Minstrel, Sorceress, Thief, Troll, Warrior and Wizard.

3 ADVENTURE CARDS
These are used to determine the encounters you'll have. They also hide equipment, followers and other useful items.

4 COMPONENTS
All the models are well detailed and very durable, while the card used is of high-quality stock.

5 TOKENS
Green tokens represent lives points, and red shows your total Strength, while blue is used to show your current Craft level.

and must attempt to recover the Crown of Command and then use its powers to remove the rest of the players from the game. The Crown sits in the centre of the game board, and the players must travel through each layer of the board (known as Regions) in order to retrieve it. Players roll a die to move on each turn, and then take care of any encounters found on their tile. Said encounters are drawn from cards, and may result in anything from battles with dangerous creatures to useful magical objects.

Battling comes in two forms: Physical and Psychic. Physical sees both you and the monster in question (or even another player) rolling die and adding your strength score and any additional modifiers – whoever scores the highest wins. Psychic combat is handled in the same way, only Craft is used to determine the end result. It's a simple system, but an elegant one, allowing you to concentrate on exploration instead of getting bogged down in rules.

Talisman works because of its sheer variety. The 14 available characters are distinctly different, possessing their own unique skills and abilities, while the large encounter deck ensures no two games are ever the same. It might be getting on, but like the clichéd wine, it really does get better with age.

BEST FOR: EVERYONE



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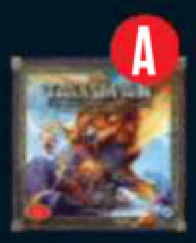


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Talisman: The Dragon Expansion

Publisher: Fantasy Flight Games // Players: 2-6 // RRP: £31.99

First published in 2011, this *Talisman* expansion pack has a suitably draconic theme. The most notable addition to the core game is the two-sided game board, adding a whole new region to explore. One side looks extremely similar to the original board region, but features new rules, while the other revolves around an epic quest to the Dragon Tower, which was last seen in the third edition of *Talisman*.

The expansion is full of challenging enemy combatants, culminating in a fearsome battle with one of three dragon lords, which adds additional longevity to the set.

What's interesting here, though, is that the dragon you meet at the beginning could be completely different to the one you finally face, as all three dragons are vying for power. Dragon tokens are drawn on each turn and placed on the relevant lord; once it amasses enough tokens it takes over as King. It's an interesting conceit, adding much-needed uncertainty to the end game.

While *The Dragon Expansion* is certainly challenging, the addition of six new characters, ranging from tanks like the Minotaur and Dragon Hunter, to the more versatile Dragon Rider and Conjurer, certainly makes for a fairer fight.

BEST FOR: EXPERIENCED PLAYERS

Talisman: The Highland Expansion



Publisher: Fantasy Flight Games // Players: 2-6 // RRP: £31.99

If you felt that the base game of *Talisman* wasn't big enough then you can make it even more epic by adding this rather nifty expansion. *The Highland Expansion* bolts onto the main board, connecting to The Crags and adding a whole new area ruled by the vicious Eagle King. Gameplay continues as normal, but in addition to finding the usual equipment there's also the chance to pick up Trinkets, which can be sold in towns and cities for large amounts of gold.

As with other Talisman expansions, *The Highland Expansion* introduces several new characters that range from the brutish highlander to a powerful vampiress. They not only mix well with the base characters, but also introduce a large number of female heroes, a gender that has so far been poorly represented in the original game.

Other additions to *The Highland Expansion* include the addition of Relic cards, powerful items that are rewarded upon destroying the Eagle King. Interestingly, if they are discarded then they are removed from the game completely, stopping anyone else from easily taking them. By far the most interesting card, however, is the Eyrie Vanguard, which takes cards from the Highland deck and adds them to the base *Talisman* deck, allowing even adventures not in the area to be affected by the new realm.

BEST FOR: EXPERIENCED PLAYERS

Expansion Of The Month
Talisman: The Dungeon Expansion

Publisher: Fantasy Flight Games // Players: 2-6
RRP: £31.99

The Dungeon is quite simply the best Talisman expansion we've so far encountered. It's one of three corner expansions currently available, and proves to be suitably different to *The Highland* and *City* expansions. It connects to the Ruins tile of the base game, and is a dangerous area full surprisingly vicious encounters that culminates in an epic battle against the Lord of Darkness.

Unlike *The Highland Expansion*, the rewards for defeating the evil lord are far greater, giving you a much better chance of retrieving the Crown of Command. It's also possible to be teleport to the coveted crown, so make sure you have a *Talisman* piece.



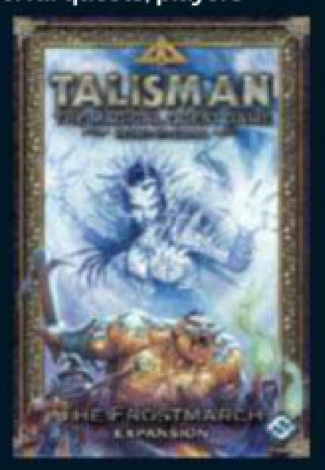
While there are only five characters, they are extremely well balanced, and more than capable of dealing with the expansion's brutal encounters.

Talisman: The Frostmarch Expansion

Publisher: Fantasy Flight Games // Players: 2-6
RRP: £18.99

In addition to its corner expansions, *Fantasy Flight* also has a number of smaller, wallet-friendly options. *The Frostmarch* is a good example of this, featuring a wintery theme and a number of new Warlock Quest cards that replace the random die system used in the base game. There are 24 in total, and many of them are quite difficult to achieve.

As well as more powerful quests, players must also deal with an evil Ice Queen, who proves to be a fairly formidable opponent thanks to her high Strength and Craft ratings. It's all rounded off by four new characters: Ogre Chieftain, Warlock, Leprechaun and Necromancer, and 84 new adventure cards.



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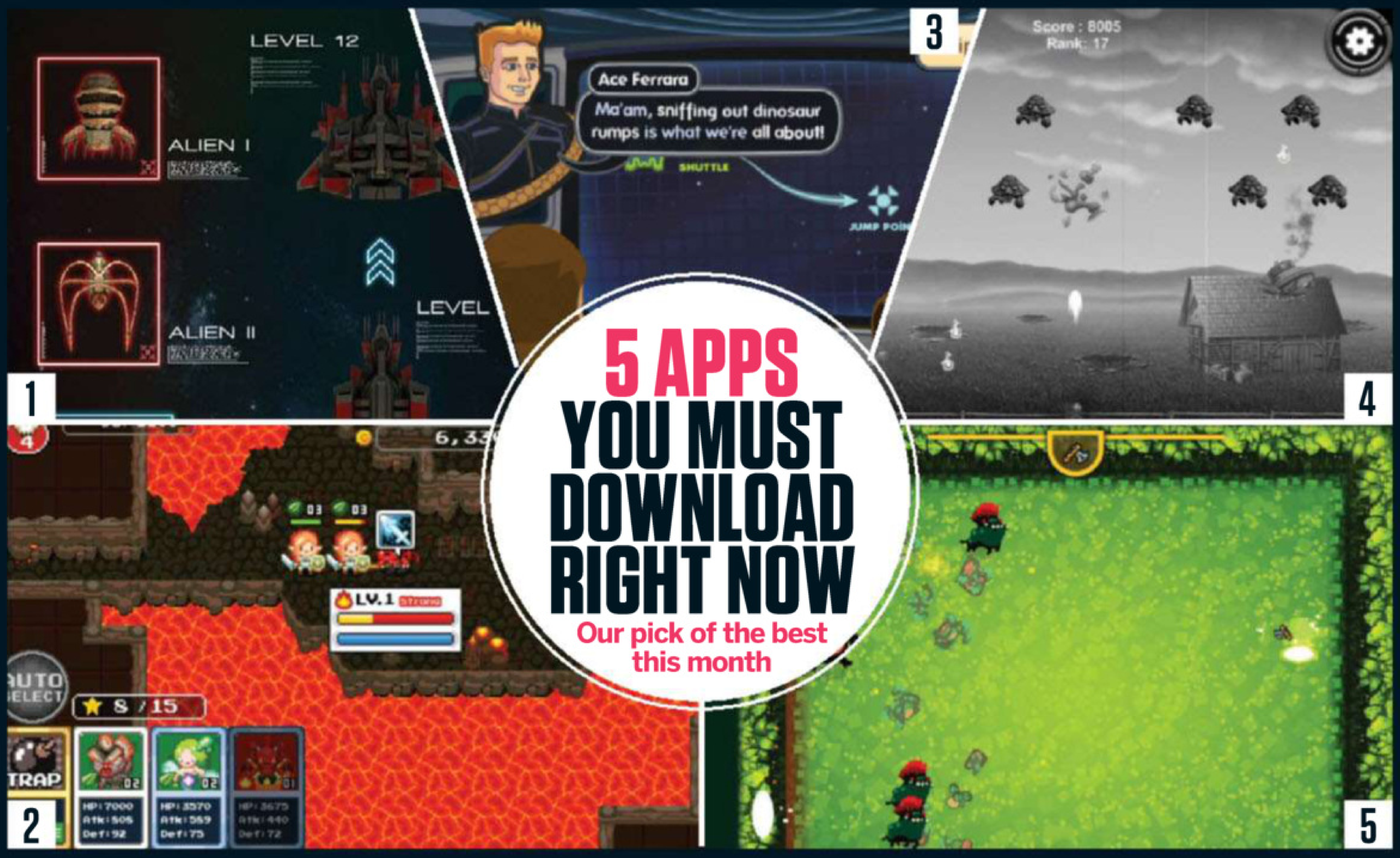
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5 APPS YOU MUST DOWNLOAD RIGHT NOW

Our pick of the best this month

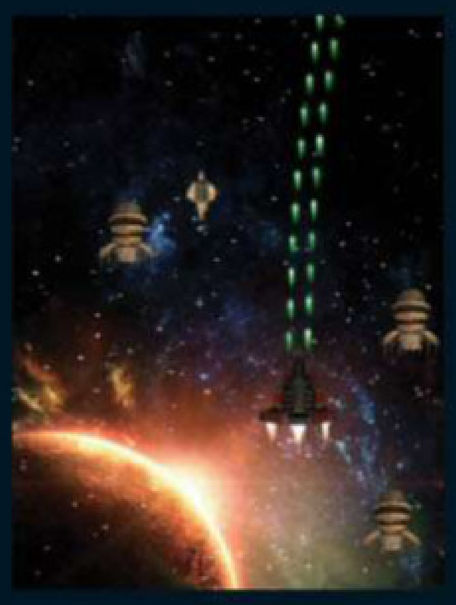
ORBITAL WARS: A SPACE SHOOTER

PRICE: £0.59/$0.99
FOR: IOS/ANDROID



1 Drawing inspiration from the retro arcade classic, *Space Invaders*, *Orbital Wars* takes it up a notch with more challenging gameplay and stunning, high-quality visuals. The levels are a little repetitive, but difficulty scale increases the further you progress. If you happen to have a pair of anaglyph 3D glasses lying around, the game gives you the option of switching from Normal mode to Real 3-D.

BEST FOR: BLOWING UP ALIENS



WELCOME TO THE DUNGEON

PRICE: FREE
FOR: IOS/ANDROID



2 *Welcome To The Dungeon* is a new card-battling RPG with a twist: you are on the evil side. Play as a diabolical villain, summoning demons, stirring up trouble and generally making life more difficult for do-gooders. Complete tasks to gain 'infamy' points and trade gold and gems to build up your army. *Welcome To The Dungeon* is a slick and modern RPG with high-quality visuals, and the 16-bit graphics are delightful.

BEST FOR: EVIL CACKLING



ACE FERRARA AND THE DINO MENACE

PRICE: £2.49/$3.99
FOR: IOS



3 Space dinosaurs have declared war on the Proton Riders, and it's up to Ace to stop them. As the protagonist, you have total command over your ship, and can control engine speed, turbo boosting, firearms and locking targets. The best thing about *Ace Ferrara* is the plot, but you're not forced to sit through it. If shooting stuff is more your thing, you can skip through and get back to the firepower.

BEST FOR: STOPPING DINOSAURS



INVADERS! FROM OUTER SPACE

PRICE: £0.69/$0.99
FOR: IOS/ANDROID



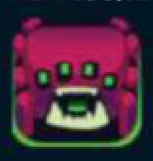
4 *Invaders! From Outer Space* presents a familiar scenario: aliens are attacking Earth, and you have to kill them. The aliens in question have come down to Earth during the Cold War. General Jonah and mad scientist Dr Dent team up to shoot the invaders, but they're shooting back. It's very minimalist, essentially being an old-fashioned shooting game focused purely on killings aliens, great fun.

BEST FOR: DEFENDING EARTH



SPOOKLANDS

PRICE: £0.69/$0.99
FOR: IOS/ANDROID



5 This one-fingered shooter game is perfect for the overstressed. Trapped in a colourful, retro arena, you are the target for evil creatures and enemies that want you dead, your task being to kill them first. You must learn each of their skills and weak point. The three levels comprise three infinite settings: Amazonia, Spider's Nest and Necropolis. The controls may seem simple at first, but then creatures start to come at you from all angles, and it gets hectic very quickly.

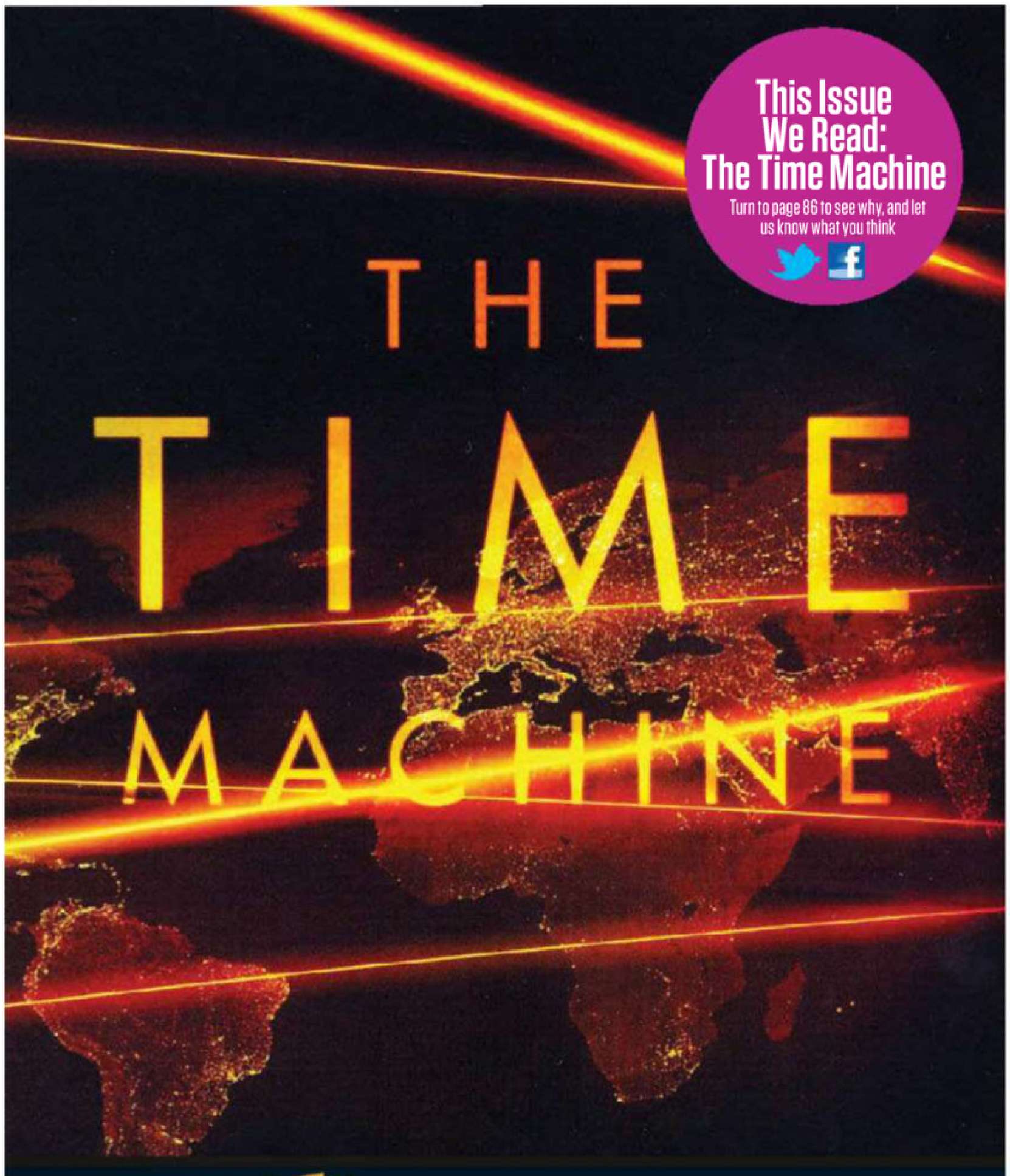
BEST FOR: STRESS RELIEF



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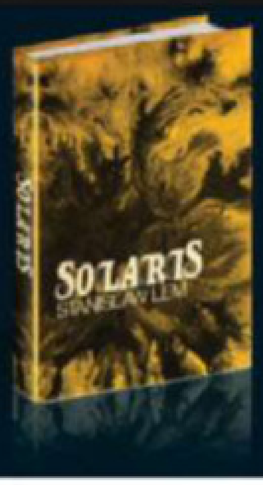
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This Issue We Read: The Time Machine

Turn to page 86 to see why, and let us know what you think

Next We'll Be Reading: Solaris by Stanisław Lem



1 Pick up *Solaris* by Stanislaw Lem, the sci-fi classic that took mankind to its limits and pulled no punches in depicting the subsequent trauma.

2 Follow SciFiNow on Twitter. Read and share your thoughts with the hashtag #BookClub; they might make it into the magazine!

3 You can contribute to the Book Club discussions as much or as little as you like; the most important thing is that you have fun.

4 Pick up issue 101 of SciFiNow to check out what we thought and learn about the history of the book and its author with our Essential Read.

FEATURES

86 Essential Read: The Time Machine
Its this HG Wells' most truly timeless work of science fiction?

90 A Beginner's Guide: Douglas Adams
Why there's more to the master of sci-fi comedy than the *Hitchhiker*'s series.

100 Neil Gaiman
One of the genre's most loved authors talks children's fiction, *Sandman* and *American Gods*.

REVIEWS

92 The Abyss Beyond Dreams
93 Star Wars: A New Dawn
93 The Hawley Book Of The Dead
94 The Ghosts Of Heaven
94 A Man Lies Dreaming
96 Timebomb
96 City Of Stairs
96 An English Ghost Story
98 Consumed
98 You Are The Hero

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Write a review of the last book you read, and it could appear on scifinow.co.uk. Submit your review as a 300-word text file to scifinow@imagine-publishing.co.uk

ESSENTIAL READ: THE TIME MACHINE

WORDS MATTHEW HANDRAHAN

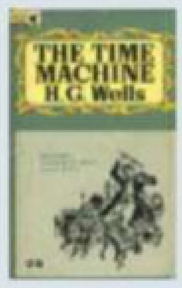
IS HG WELLS' FIRST NOVEL A TREATISE ON TIME TRAVEL, A RELIC OF A MORE PREJUDICED AGE, A PLEA FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE OR SIMPLY A CRACKING ADVENTURE? THE ANSWER MAY SURPRISE YOU...



Did HG Wells invent time travel? Not quite, although he fixed the now commonly held ideas of what it means to travel through time in the public consciousness. Washington Irving's Rip Van Winkle slept for 20 years, missing the entire American Revolutionary War, but his journey equated to two decades of missed memories rather than missed time. Charles Dickens' Ebenezer Scrooge was shown events from both his past and future, but it's never clear whether his Yuletide visitations are real or merely phantoms of his imagination. Mark Twain's Connecticut Yankee merely stumbled into King Arthur's Court, without any control of how he got there or why.

What HG Wells accomplished – and what makes his 1895 novel *The Time Machine* so significant – was the depiction of time as just another dimension, the same as those used to describe the physical space in which we exist. Armed with the scientific method and rapid advances in technology, humanity had discovered ways to master the other dimensions, so given enough time and resources, Wells surmised that one day we might also master time. As its iconic title suggests, *The Time Machine* introduced a contraption that could navigate the fourth dimension much as a car navigates a road, moving forwards and backwards to pre-determined coordinates. In doing so, he

SYNOPSIS



The well-heeled residents of Richmond, Surrey understand little more about time than the correct point in the day at which to serve tea. But the Time Traveller knows that it is simply one more dimension, like forwards or backwards, or left or right, and has created a machine that will allow him to travel to its reaches.

Needless to say, London in the year 802,701 is rather different to the city we know today. It is populated by a diminutive race known as the Eloi, who have achieved a great deal by mastering their environment with technology, only to see it all fall into disrepair for lack of effort.

But then there are the Morlocks, primitive cave-dwellers whose subterranean toil supports the decadent existence of the Eloi above.

Is this really what becomes of the human race? At least the Time Traveller has his machine – or he will when he finds out who stole it...

created one of the most creatively fertile sub-genres in literature, and in the process fired the imaginations of generations of actual scientists.

Indeed, many of the ideas that flowered in subsequent time-travel literature blended effortlessly with actual science, best represented by paradoxes that have puzzled authors and theoretical physicists alike. What would happen if a person travelled back in time and killed his own grandfather? If a man attempting to invent a time machine received a visit from his future self with the solution to his insurmountable problem, where did the idea come from? If you've encountered *Back To The Future*, *Bill & Ted's Excellent Adventure*, or any number of movies, books or TV shows, you'll have seen these ideas and others like them picked apart in every possible way.

These days, we know that time travel of the sort imagined by HG Wells is very likely impossible, and the grand old man of science fiction would no doubt be disappointed by such a cosmic buzz kill. But there is a workaround that's very much within our grasp: the opportunity to travel back to a very different time and place. Actually, it's quite simple: you take a copy of *The Time Machine*, open it to the first page, and start to read.

The Time Machine was HG Wells' first novel, and the starting point for his considerable fame. But while it may be remembered as a foundational text for the notion of time travel, he didn't really have time travel in mind at all. It is no accident that *The Time Machine* starts and ends at a genteel dinner party in Victorian England, with a protagonist who Wells doesn't even bother to name, let alone award a personality. Though he was the first author to send a character forward through time with the help of technology, he only meant to provide commentary on British society of the time – and to issue a stern warning at what might lie ahead should its present course be maintained.

This interest in critiquing reality through fiction is present in all of Wells' great novels, and his influence would prove to be significant indeed. In an essay called 'Wells, Hitler And The World State', George Orwell posited that, "Thinking people born about the beginning of this century are in some sense Wells' own creation... The minds of all of us, and therefore the physical world, would be perceptibly different if Wells had never existed.

"Back in the 1900s it was a wonderful experience for a boy to discover HG Wells. There you were, in a world of pedants, clergymen and golfers, with your future employers exhorting you to 'get on or get out,' your parents systematically warping your sexual life, and your dull-witted schoolmasters sniggering over their Latin tags; and here was this wonderful man who could tell you about the inhabitants of the planets and the bottom of the sea, and who knew that the future was not going to be what respectable people imagined."

That is precisely what Wells intended to do in *The Time Machine*. Britain in the late 19th Century was the seat of a wealthy empire, but it was one built on the foundation of a rigid class system that relied on the compliance and subjugation of an impoverished and uneducated working class. Now, it's fair to say that ➪



It's easy to forget just how groundbreaking *The Time Machine* was.



Whichever way you look, Wells' novel poses a pretty bleak outlook for the future of mankind.

5 Reasons to read... The Time Machine

1 Frankly, it should be obvious. This is HG Wells' first full novel, and as such one of the four or five most important works of science fiction in history. If you follow the genre, you need to read this.

2 Actually, this should be obvious, too. This is probably the first real-time travel story, featuring a scientific creation with the ability to move forwards and backwards in time at its centre.

3 It's a window into the Victorian psyche. Wells was a talented young author at a time when Britain effectively ruled the world, but he could see the unrest among its people and the dark possibilities that lay ahead.

4 It goes far beyond social commentary. Before the book finishes, Wells takes his Time Traveller 30 million years into the future to the death of Earth itself – perhaps the first depiction of such an event in the history of literature.

5 To see the start of a great shift in one man's worldview. The remarkable thing about Wells' work, both fictional and otherwise, is its clear depiction of his changing attitudes on all manner of social and political subjects.

Issue 101's Essential Read: Solaris by Stanisław Lem

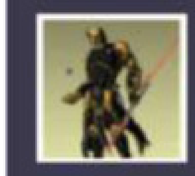
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Your Take On The Classic

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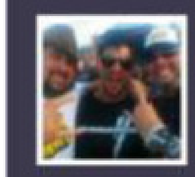
"Read *The Time Machine* many years ago. Love it, classic HG Wells. Cannot beat the best and original Time Travel adventure #BookClub" **@safcinexile**



"It's been forever, but it was a really good read; the movie on the other hand did not do it justice. #BookClub" **@Galaxy_Junkyard**



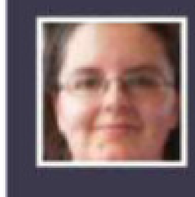
"Highly enjoyable and ahead of its time (like all Wells' material). Could be more wibbly wobbly timey wimey though I guess. #BookClub" **@dannychampion**



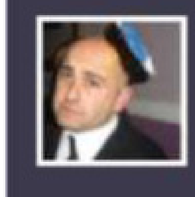
"A truly inspiring novel by one of the few authors who predicted the future we now live in. Though we can't time travel yet... #BookClub" **@sldouglas88**



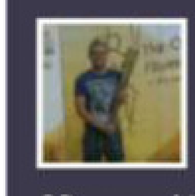
"Excellent book from the father of Science Fiction #BookClub" **@quidditysea**



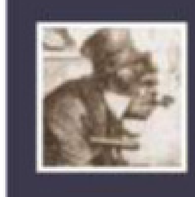
"Great book, better than the film versions #BookClub" **@JoanneSale1**



"Super book, but I love HG Wells anyway! #BookClub" **@paulbestall**



"Has aged really well – much better than some of his other works #BookClub" **@Dummackin911**



"Great, but not as great as *War Of The Worlds* #BookClub" **@martinmcgrath**

What do you think? Let us know on Twitter or Facebook

Wells was neither working class nor impoverished, but he was an outspoken socialist throughout his life who lamented the human potential sacrificed at the altar of the Capitalists' balance sheet.

"England alone in the last three centuries must have produced scores of Newtons who never learnt to read," he wrote in his book, *The Outline Of History*. "Hundreds of Daltons, Darwins, Bacons and Huxleys who died stunted in hovels, or never got a chance of proving their quality. All the world over, there must have been myriads [sic] of potential first-class investigators, splendid artists, creative minds, who never caught a gleam of inspiration or opportunity, for every one of that kind who has left his mark on the world.

"But a world with something like a secure international peace and something like social justice, will fish for capacity with the fine net of universal education, and may expect a yield beyond comparison, greater than any yield of able and brilliant men that the world has known hitherto."

Even in an age dominated by religion, Wells was drawn to science and its seemingly endless chain of remarkable discoveries. Among those that fascinated him most were developments that completely altered our understanding of the age of the Earth and its place in the universe. Over time, such knowledge would completely erode his belief in Christianity and other major religions, but by the 1880s his mind was already open to new possibilities. The fact that our planet could be 2 billion years old, he once said, "absolutely overpowers the imagination."

As the common conception of time was obliterated, so too was humanity's eminence in the universe. People had not existed on the Earth for its entire lifespan, and it made sense to Wells that without careful consideration, it might disappear once again. All around him, a misplaced reverence for the past seemed to slow our progress and obfuscate growing, immediate dangers.

"Though foresight creeps into our politics and a reference to consequence into our morality, it is still the past that dominates our lives," he wrote in 'The Discovery Of The Future'. "But why? Why are we so bound to it? It is into the future we go, tomorrow is the eventful thing for us... Yet we marshal and order men into classes entirely with regard to the past; we draw shame and honour out of the past. Against the rights of property, the vested interests, the agreements and establishments of the past, the future has no rights."

This is the context from which Wells' serene, decadent and fruit-eating Eloi and devolved, brutish and carnivorous Morlocks emerged. It is the late 19th Century class divide at once calcified and writ absurdly large. Some have peered between *The Time Machine*'s lines and, in its depiction of the Morlocks, seen the unpleasant spectre of racism lurking there. Such a reading is possible, but it doesn't stand up to the more likely interpretation that this is Wells' warning of where the indolence of the British bourgeoisie might lead if it continued to ignore and suppress the humanity of the proletariat.

This is reinforced by a journey even further into the future at the end of the novel, to an Earth wilting in the presence of a dying Sun, where "all the sounds of man, the bleating of sheep, the cries of birds, the hum of insects, the stir that makes the background of our lives – all that was over." It is as if Wells is reminding his readers that our time on this planet is finite regardless, and to ignore the message of the Eloi and the Morlocks at their peril. The fact that the Labour Party was born in 1900, just five years after the publication of *The Time Machine*, only proves Wells' canny knack for assessing the tone of the times.

"Hitherto, in Great Britain at any rate, the working man has shown himself a being of the most limited and practical outlook. His narrowness of imagination,





George Pal's 1960 film version is one of *The Time Machine* more famous adaptations.

his lack of general ideas, has been the despair of the socialist and of every sort of revolutionary theorist," Wells wrote in 'The Labour Unrest'. "Now, with an effect of suddenness, this ceases to be the case.

"The slack days for rulers and owners are over. If there are still to be rulers and owners and managing and governing people, then in the face of the new masses, sensitive, intelligent, critical, irritable, as no common people have ever been before, these rulers and owners must be prepared to make themselves and display themselves wise, capable and heroic – beyond any aristocratic precedent. The alternative, if it is an alternative, is resignation – to the Social Democracy.

"We have all to think, to think hard and think generously, and there is not a man in England today, even though his hands are busy at work, whose brain may not be helping in this great task of social rearrangement which lies before us all."

Wells lived to see but a handful of the great innovations and upheavals he forecast in his novels. He certainly saw the first flourish of socialist reform, the desperate need for which was the bedrock of *The Time Machine*, but he died in 1946, just before the fallout from World War II led to the creation of the National Health Service Act, the National Insurance Act and the National Assistance Act. It can be reasonably argued that through his non-fiction writing, Wells was one of the key public figures who pushed British society in this more empathetic direction, but the seed of those ideas is right there in the pages of his first novel.

None of which is to say that Wells didn't hold some contradictory and occasionally offensive views – his writing on Eugenics, for example – but any survey of his writing shows an intellect constantly shifting and changing with the times, open to and excited by new ways of seeing the world. "I hate the thought of leaving," he told the *Manchester Guardian* when asked about the thought of his own death. "Life is not half long enough for my taste. Few of my games are nearly finished, and some I feel that I have hardly begun."

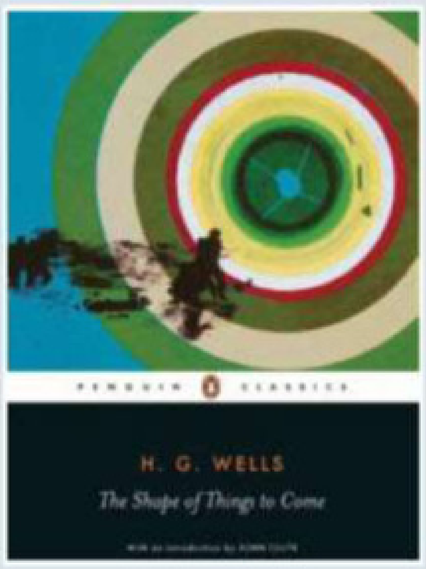
It is to Wells' credit that he held the same belief in his fellow humans. "Man still goes to war against himself, prepares fleets and armies and fortresses, like a sleep-walker who wounds himself, like some infatuated barbarian who hacks his own limbs with a knife," he wrote in 'An Englishman Looks At The World'. "But he awakens. The nightmares of empire and racial conflict and war, the grotesques of trade jealousy and tariffs, the primordial dream-stuff of lewdness and jealousy and cruelty, pale before the daylight which filters between his eyelids."

Where Have I Seen This Before?

ADVENTURES IN TIME AND SPACE

THE SHAPE OF THINGS TO COME ▸

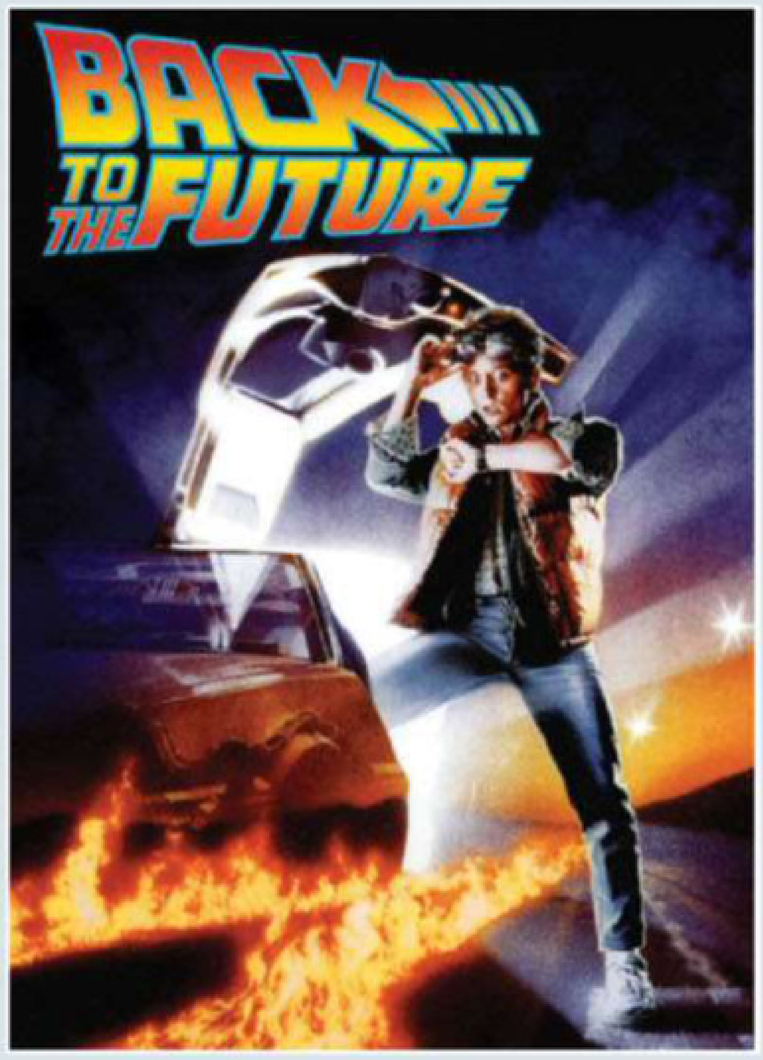
In *The Time Machine*, Wells used time travel to dissect the world. In *The Shape Of Things To Come*, he skipped the pretense and got straight down to pulling apart trends in contemporary society by imagining an alternate one. Despite being published nearly 40 years apart, they make excellent companion pieces.





DOCTOR WHO ◂

Wells didn't exactly disregard the science of time travel – it didn't even exist in 1895 – but his time machine is really just a collection of levers and gears. The creators of *Doctor Who* had access to a lot more scientific theory regarding time travel when they first started the series, but the myriad powers of the TARDIS are every bit as fanciful and unexplained.



BACK TO THE FUTURE ▴

If you want proof that Wells wasn't really writing about time travel, look no further than *Back To The Future*. Robert Zemeckis's film is a classic beyond question, but it has a feather-light touch and still manages to be a far more profound exploration of the subject. In Wells' defence, the Grandfather Paradox was conceived almost 50 years later.

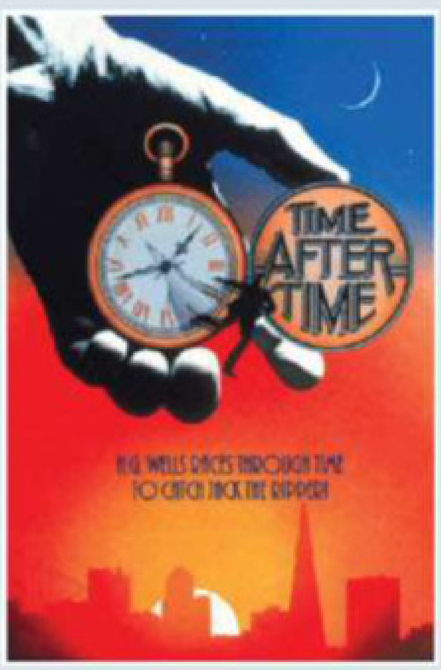


BILL & TED'S EXCELLENT ADVENTURE ◂

For people of a certain generation, this charming comedy might be the first encounter with time travel, and it isn't as dumb as its slacker protagonists might indicate. There are a number of set pieces that make light of time-travel paradoxes, as well as winning portrayals of actual historical figures.

TIME AFTER TIME ▸

HG Wells often pops up in time-travel stories in all forms of entertainment – a respectful nod to the man who got the ball rolling in the first place. This 1979 film may well be the highlight among them all, depicting Wells as the owner of an actual time machine, who subsequently travels to the Seventies in order to hunt down Jack the Ripper. Yes, really.



11/22/63 ▸

Stephen King had the idea for a story in which a man travelled time to prevent the assassination of US president John F Kennedy way back in 1971, but he only found the necessary confidence to research and write the novel in the last decade. Published in 2011, it was a critical smash, and undoubtedly one of the greatest time-travel stories of recent times.



A BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO DOUGLAS ADAMS

WORDS **POPPY-JAY PALMER**

Get up to speed on the life of a pioneer of comic sci-fi

In 1978, BBC Radio 4 aired a comedy called *The Hitchhiker's Guide To The Galaxy* by a relatively unknown writer called Douglas Adams. The hit radio show was then developed into an increasingly inaccurately named trilogy in five parts by Adams, which included *Hitchhiker's, The Restaurant At The End Of The Universe, Life The Universe And Everything, So Long And Thanks For All The Fish* and *Mostly Harmless*. Now, 35 years later and 13 years after Adams' untimely death, the series has been adapted into a television show, stage plays, comics, a computer game and a major feature film.

Adams' love of sci-fi and his brilliant turn of phrases as a humourist has gained him immense popularity with fans of both science fiction and satire. His stories are timeless (sometimes literally) and Arthur Dent, the reluctant protagonist of the *Hitchhiker's* books, remains one of the most loved and well-known characters in sci-fi. The *Hitchhiker's* series and his *Dirk Gently* novels are always in enough demand to warrant reprints, with new covers being released every couple of years.

His legacy has also been continued with an annual Towel Day. On 25 May, two weeks after the date of his death, fans carry a towel around for a day in tribute of Adams and his work. Towel Day is an internationally recognised event, with celebrations all over the world.

He is one of the most quotable authors in sci-fi, having imparted wisdom on a wealth of topics, like his religious stance ("Isn't it enough to see that a garden is beautiful without having to believe that there are fairies at the bottom of it too?") to his stance on deadlines ("I love deadlines. I like the whooshing sound they make as they fly by").

"HIS LEGACY HAS CONTINUED WITH AN ANNUAL TOWEL DAY"



© Rex

Which author would you like to see tackled next?

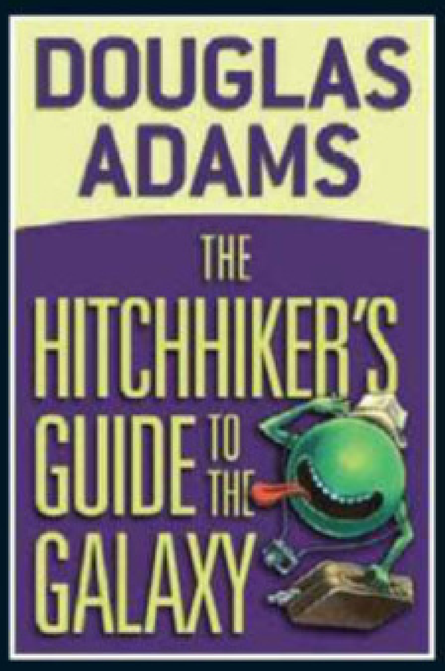
Let us know on Twitter or Facebook



Adams had been working on a *Hitchhiker's* film before he died. It was rewritten and released in 2005, with Martin Freeman playing Arthur Dent.



A *Dirk Gently* TV series aired on BBC Four in 2012, starring Stephen Mangan as Gently and Darren Boyd as Richard MacDuff.



Don't panic

In the beginning, there was...

THE HITCHHIKER'S GUIDE TO THE GALAXY
Publisher: Pan Books
Published: 1979
Price: £7.99

Adams came up with the idea for his most famous work while lying drunk in a field flicking through a copy of *Hitch-Hiker's Guide To Europe* and staring into the sky. It tells the story of Arthur Dent after his house and then planet are destroyed in the same morning to make way for a bypass. Arthur hitch-hikes across the universe, accompanied by his alien friend Ford, a human woman named Trillian, President of the Galaxy Zaphod Beeblebrox and Marvin the depressed android.

"One of the first comedy books I ever read. It's the funniest book ever! #BookClub" **@quidittysea**



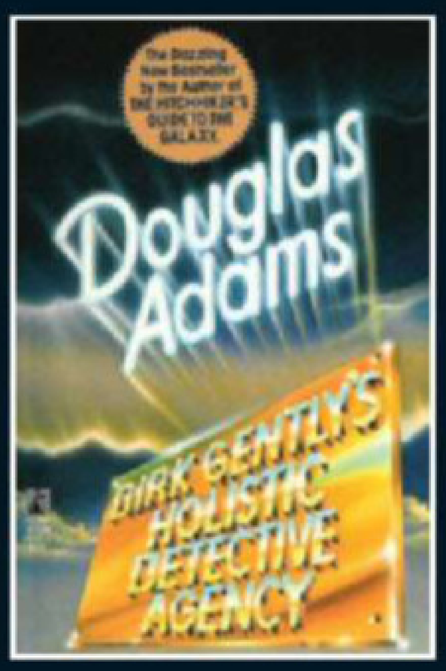
Heart of gold

The breaking of the fellowship

MOSTLY HARMLESS
Publisher: William Heinemann
Published: 1992
Price: £7.99

Arthur crash-lands on the planet Lamuella and becomes the planet's sandwich maker, Ford has some trouble with the Guide's publishing house, and Trillian's alternate-universe self Tricia McMillan misses out on joining Zaphod because she wanted to fetch her handbag. Adams died before getting around to writing a sixth book, not wanting to leave the series on a downer, but *Artemis Fowl* author Eoin Colfer finished the job with *And Another Thing...* released exactly 30 years after the first book.

"It was a much-needed send up of genre conventions, and probably the best sci-fi comedy writing ever #BookClub" **@ParsonsFiction**



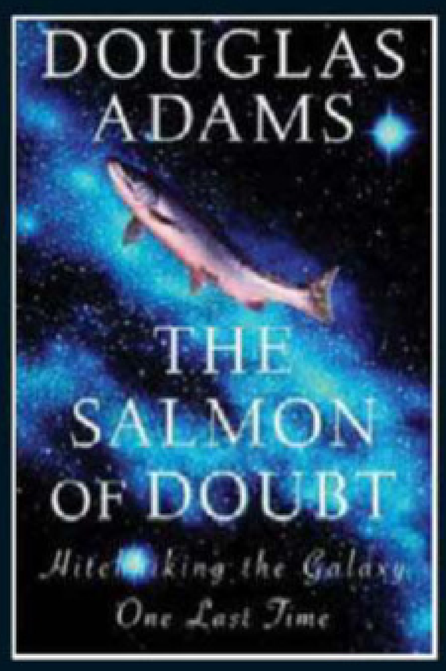
Gently does it

Concerning mud, music and quantum mechanics

DIRK GENTLY'S HOLISTIC DETECTIVE AGENCY
Publisher: William Heinemann
Published: 1987
Price: £7.99

Adams described *Dirk Gently's Holistic Detective Agency* as a "thumping good detective-ghost-horror-who dunnit-time travel-romantic-musical-comedy-epic". Dirk Gently, a private investigator, is called on by a pal to help solve a mystery involving a dead cat, a computer whiz-kid, an Electric Monk, quantum mechanics, an over-200-year-old Chronologist, Samuel Taylor Coleridge and a pizza, while also proving the world's fundamental interconnectedness.

"I find they're the Adams books I return to more than *Hitchhikers*. Utterly complete worlds. And fucking hilarious." **@lennyukdeejay**



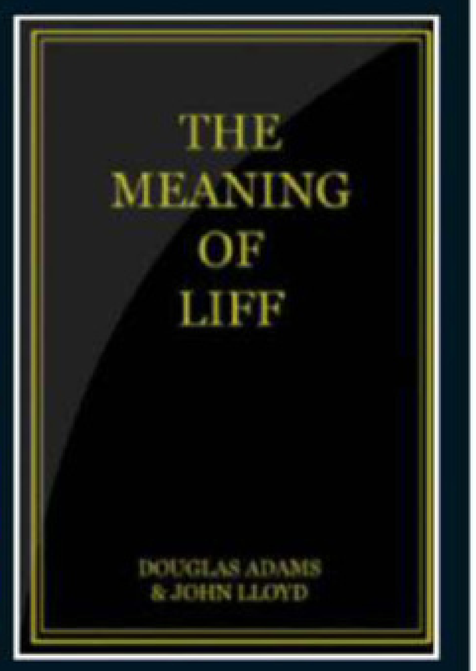
The legacy

Essays, excerpts and everything else

THE SALMON OF DOUBT
Publisher: William Heinemann
Published: 1988
Price: £7.99

The Salmon Of Doubt: Hitchhiking The Galaxy One Last Time was published exactly a year after his death in tribute, and includes eulogies from Richard Dawkins, Stephen Fry, Terry Jones and Christopher Cerf. It is essentially a posthumous compilation of what could be salvaged from his four computers, and features previously published and unpublished short stories, articles, letters, interviews, speeches and essays, and the first chapters of the long-awaited third *Dirk Gently* novel.

"It's a great look into his mind and process. As everything is either short or incomplete, you see thoughts you wouldn't otherwise." **@scourgeoe**



Around the world

Toponymy and etymology

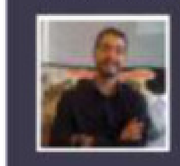
THE MEANING OF LIFF
Publisher: Pan Books
Published: 1983
Price: £9.99

The Meaning Of Liff has been called a "dictionary of things that there aren't any words for yet". Co-written with David Lloyd, place names are given definitions. Among them are 'Aboyne' ("To beat an expert at a game of skill by playing so appallingly that none of his clever tactics or strategies are of any use to him"), 'Ossett' ("A frilly spare-toilet-roll-cosy") and 'Little Urswick' ("The member of any class who most inclines a teacher towards the view that capital punishment should be introduced in schools").

"*Liff* was another work of genius. If you're at a bookcase and see it there, you know that person has impeccable taste." **@johnniewifi**

YOUR READS

What you lot have been reading this month



"I'm reading *Ancillary Sword* by Ann Leckie, and yes I am enjoying it, though I wish I'd read *Ancillary Justice* first. #BookClub" **@johnniewifi**



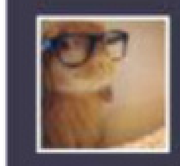
"*Dr Who: Engines Of War* – The War Doctor + Time War + John Hurt = let you work it out. What more can I say! #BookClub" **@safcinexile**



"*The Bone Clocks* by David Mitchell. Surprisingly my first experience of his work. #MustReadCloudAtlas #BookClub" **@Wingless_Animus**



"*The Magician King* by Lev Grossman. So far not as good as the first one, but early days still, hoping for good things. #BookClub" **@SB_Murray**



"*Dexter* book 4. It's alright. just ordered @RichardAyoade bio :) #bookclub" **@meowy24**



"Currently rereading *The Man In The Maze* by Robert Silverberg – as good as I remember. Recommended #BookClub" **@mockery66**



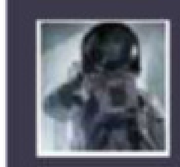
"Dacre Stoker's *Dracula The Undead*. Feels like meeting up with old friends after a long time. Not a great book though :-) #BookClub" **@TheCrowLady**



"Reading @AquilaRift *House Of Suns*. So so good and can't put it down! Building up for a great finale. #BookClub" **@Craigsg1**



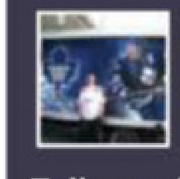
"Getting further into Larry Niven's classic *Ringworld*, which has started well #BookClub" **@ParsonsFiction**



"*Sacrament* by Clive Barker, a darkly imaginative blend of gritty realism & fantasy with superb characters. Excellent #BookClub" **@paul_bowler**



"*A Storm Of Swords (Steel & Snow)* Cracking stuff! #BookClub" **@acesolo5**



"*Fool's Assassin* by @robinhobb. And it is wonderful. Welcome back Fitz! #BookClub" **@lunchbox1977**

Tell us **what you're reading** on Twitter or Facebook

Details **Authors:** Peter F Hamilton **Publisher:** Del Rey Books **Price:** £20 **Released:** Out now

THE ABYSS BEYOND DREAMS

A political Void

Few contemporary authors handle the elusive and expansive space opera genre as easily as Peter F Hamilton. He is among a select group of masters who are able to appeal to readers outside hardcore fans of sci-fi.

Hamilton's novels are an invariably easy read, and *The Abyss Beyond Dreams* is no exception. It does not mean that he dumbs down his stories' thematic elements or rehashes the many clichés of space-based sci-fi, however; rather simply that he writes with a sense of flow and progression that is hard to rival.

The hook behind *The Abyss Beyond Dreams* may be one of this year's best. The opening chapter yanks the reader awake, introducing and then catastrophically upturning the world that is being opened up. His future vision lacks the usual polished exterior of novels of this ilk: his characters are refreshingly foul-mouthed, the violence is visceral and immediate instead of clinical and detached, and there is genuine inspiration in Hamilton's vision of technical – and human – evolution. The first 100 pages or so ooze vigour, character, personality and cinematic flair for action and suspense.

"IT DIRECTLY REFERENCES HIS MOST ACCLAIMED SERIES, BUT WITHOUT DETRACTING FROM THE EXPERIENCE"

The Abyss Beyond Dreams sees Hamilton return to the world of his *Void* trilogy, setting up a new epic within that fascinating world where mental powers have supplanted technical evolution. It directly references events from his most acclaimed series, but without detracting from the reading experience. It's a world that you'll want to visit and explore, from muddy, rain-drenched forests to planet-sized space stations.

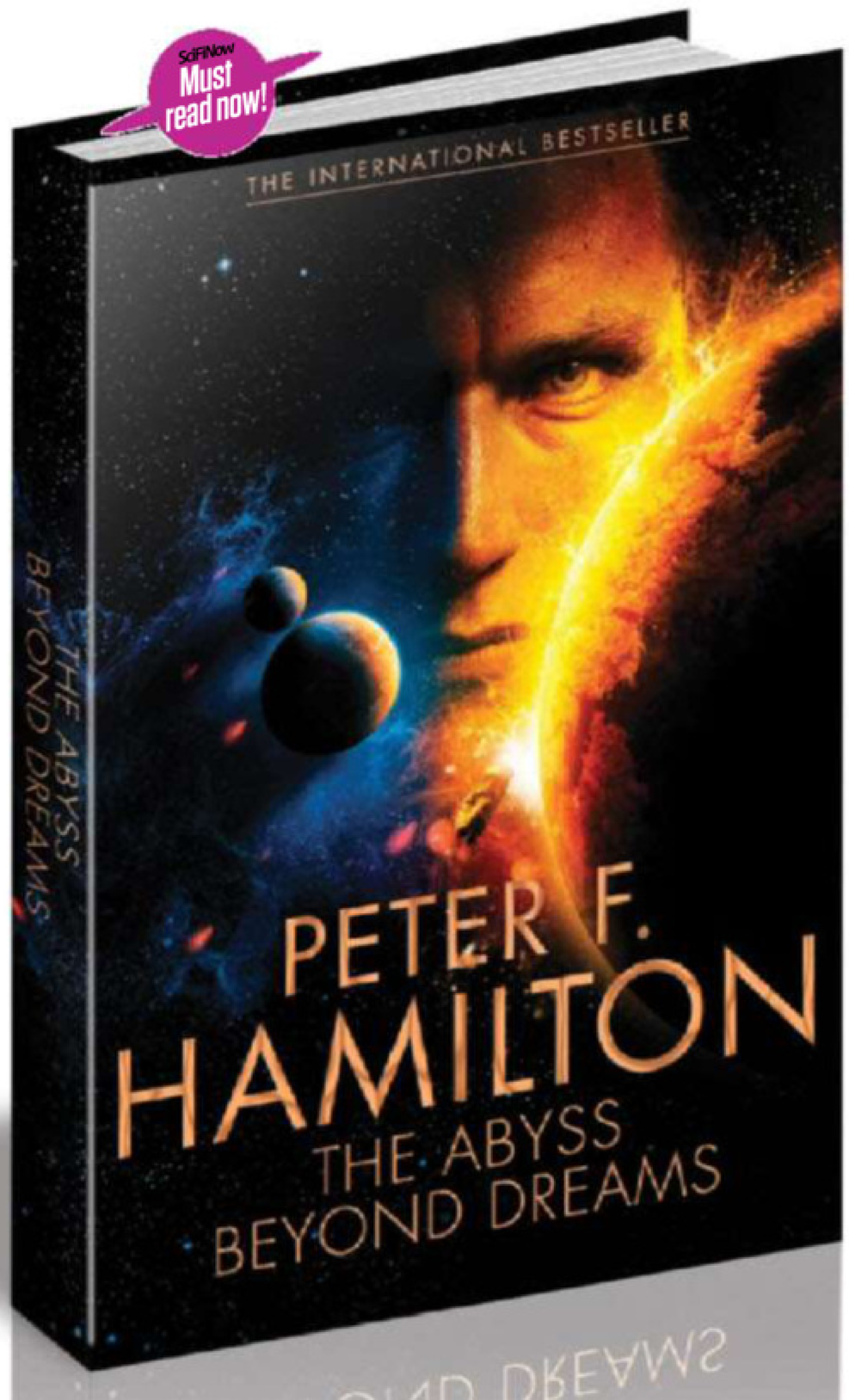
However, what does hamper the story after the excellent setup is that a large bulk of the novel is taken under a transplanted South-American-esque revolutionary romance, as one of the central characters, soldier-turned-captain Slvasta, becomes a hero, gets embroiled in dirty-trick politics and revolts against a 2,000-year-old system of government. Fantastical elements like malevolent alien Fallers, telekinesis and a race against time to save the galaxy from an apocalyptic threat border on the level of salivating with excitement, but are bogged down for over half the book by a well-worn fable of a socialist revolution, class-defying romance and an intellectual revolt. This part doesn't offer much beyond a basic socio-political subtext of the petty nature of politics.

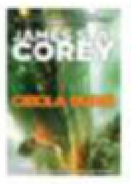
The most interesting and layered character – the desperate but resourceful Laura Brandt from the opening sequence – is absent from most of the book, while some of those Hamilton chooses to focus on instead lack the empathy and relatability she instantly inspires.

Thankfully, *The Abyss Beyond Dreams* concludes with a blistering finale that fulfils its opening promise and rewards the reader for staying patient throughout the drawn-out second act. The story strands converge without too much clashing, and a suitable number of threads remain unsolved for the saga's second and concluding entry. Despite its small stumble, the follow-up, *Night Without Stars*, is firmly on our wish list for next year.

Erlingur Einarsson

VERDICT ★★★★☆





IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...

Cibola Burn
James SA Corey
Cross-galactic settlers face the onslaught of war in Corey's fourth *Expanse* entry.

Details **Writer:** John Jackson Miller **Publisher:** Century **Price:** £19.99 **Released:** Out now

STAR WARS: A NEW DAWN

Rebel rebel

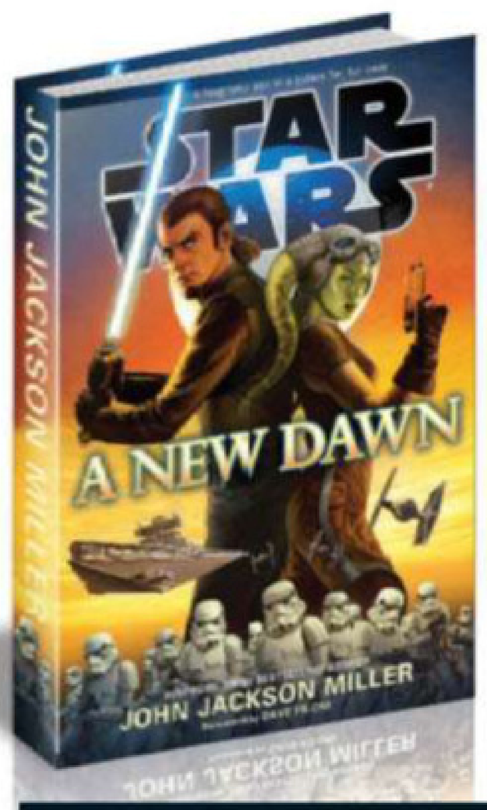
A New Dawn serves not only as the standard bearer for the saga's next stage, but also as an introduction to animated series *Star Wars: Rebels*, with characters Kanan Jarrus and Hera Syndulla taking centre stage.

The setting itself seems purposely designed to galvanise the reluctant Jarrus into action, with the at times comically evil Empire looking to plunder a planet's resources, regardless of the collateral. Initially content to stay hidden, circumstances conspire to bring him and Syndulla together in a story that marks the return to the underdog spirit that used to embody *Star Wars*.

Some may feel disappointment over the lack of appearances from established names, but the level of familiarity shown by the new breed should alleviate concerns. Jarrus has all the swashbuckling bravado of Han Solo and the lone-wolf nature of *A New Hope*-era Kenobi, and Syndulla embodies the rebel spirit while remaining enigmatic.

However, after a promising opening two-thirds, things trail off into a cavalcade of treading water and deck-clearing in preparation for the new series. And while Jarrus and Syndulla are strongly defined characters, others are less so; chief adversary Viridian, for instance, possesses all the practiced bureaucratic menace of Peter Cushing's Tarkin, only to have this gravitas marred by actions that ape the sadistic silliness of General Grievous.

Regardless, this is a competent opener, bringing enough new storytelling elements to the table without discarding everything that appealed to fans of past books. While there's room for improvement, on this evidence, *Star Wars* looks like it could be getting fun again.



"A RETURN TO THE UNDERDOG SPIRIT THAT USED TO EMBODY STAR WARS"

Steve Wright

VERDICT ★★★☆☆



IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...

Dark Lord: The Rise Of Darth Vader
James Luceno
It may not be canon, but it does a better job of depicting Anakin's descent than the films.

Details **Writer:** Chrysler Szarlan **Publisher:** Random House **Price:** £14.99 **Released:** Out now

THE HAWLEY BOOK OF THE DEAD

It's a kind of magic

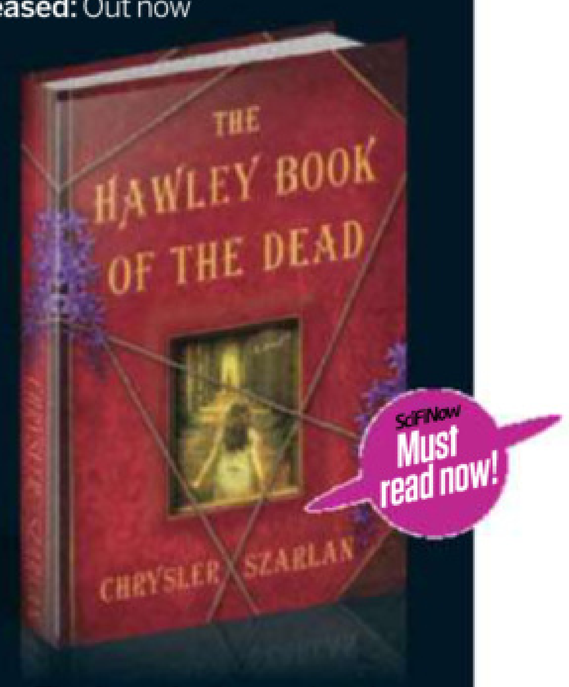
What would you do with the power to turn invisible? Most of the possible answers to that question fall into two categories: you'd either use it to go to places you're not allowed to be, or find a way to get rich off it.

And that's pretty much exactly what Revelation Dyer does. As a teenager, she used her special abilities to dig into government secrets, an act of rebellion that comes back to haunt her as an adult when she's working as a stage magician in Las Vegas. Now, she's going to have to find a new way to disappear if she wants to keep her family safe.

It's a compelling premise for a book, even as the story inevitably comes down to a straightforward chase. Szarlan weaves in snippets of history and mythology, piling mystery on mystery in a way that'll either delight or frustrate you with it's exposition-heavy dialogue.

The story unfolds at its own deliberate pace, but resist jumping ahead or trying to solve the mysteries yourself and there's plenty to enjoy.

It's refreshing, too, that the protagonist isn't a teenager struggling to come to terms with newly acquired powers and responsibilities. Instead, she's an adult with teenage kids of her own, trying to cope with grief and the consequences of her own choices.



The first of a series, there's a kind of magic to the storytelling that makes it easy to imagine wanting to go back to that world again and again.

Sarah Dobbs

VERDICT ★★★★★



IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...

The Prestige
Christopher Priest
Priest's twisty tale of competing magicians is complex – and brilliant.

60 SECONDS WITH

Jez Campbell



How would you pitch *The Dogstar Trilogy* to our readers?
An American Werewolf in London meets *Trainspotting*. That was my ten-second pitch from the outset.

Was putting werewolves in a gritty urban setting the starting point?
It's been more than 30 years since werewolves last had a proper, monster outing in *The Howling* and *An American Werewolf In London*. In both of those movies, werewolves were to be scared of – they chased you on an empty Underground.

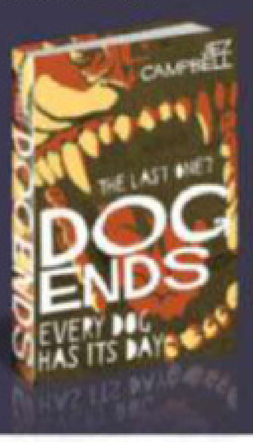
Something got lost on the way to more recent treatments – werewolves just weren't seen as frightening any more, and they certainly weren't cool.

Dogstar builds on some of the tropes from those Eighties movies, but this time you have werewolves as the (anti)heroes and the villains. *Dogstar* is set in Eighties London. A huge part of this for me is the way in London hides its dirty insides. I wanted to show that contradiction, the way that London does a great job of burying its darkness beneath the surface.

"I DEFINITELY WROTE DOGSTAR AS A MOVIE IN A NOVEL"

Would you say that it's is quite cinematic?
It's very cinematic. I very definitely wrote *Dogstar* as a movie in a novel, and in the sequel it actually becomes one! There's such a cross-over between media now, and audiences are so fully literate about the different conventions, that I think this makes perfect sense. Films become books and books become films. It's essential that novels are written with a great visual understanding, and sense of the pace and dynamic of cinema. It's what audiences want and need.

If you had to choose your favourite werewolf in books, comics or film, who would it be?



Easy, Eddie Quist from *The Howling*. He gets the best line: 'I want to give you a piece of my mind....' as he pulls a bullet from his head!

The Dogstar Trilogy by Jez Campbell is available now via CreateSpace.

60 SECONDS WITH James Thornton



How would you pitch *Sphinx: The Second Coming*?
Let me tell you a story about the Unbegun, the beings who made this universe. They love the Earth and made the Pyramids to shock us into culture. They made the Egyptian gods to guide us.

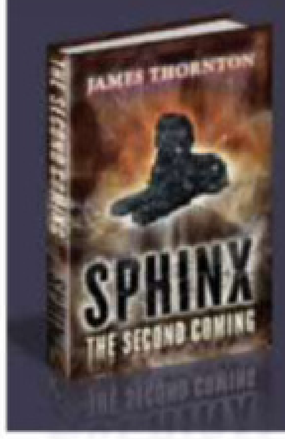
When scientists open a hidden chamber in the Great Pyramid all history breaks loose. The Egyptian gods return to judge us for what we have done to the planet. Meanwhile the aliens ruling the Multiverse are watching, ready to intervene.

"I WONDERED IF THE GODS HAD GONE QUIET AND MIGHT COME BACK"

What was it about Ancient Egypt that spoke to you as a genre author?
It sprang virtually fully formed from much more primitive-looking stages – and what a look it had. The gods reflect all this. Why are they so many, why are some spookily beautiful, why funny?

Sphinx starts with the idea that the gods have gone quiet. In studying Egypt it became clear that just like the Jews, the Egyptians believed early on that their best people spoke right to the divine, who spoke directly back to them. I wondered if the gods had gone quiet and might come back.

What is it about the genre that appeals to you?
Since I was a boy, science fiction has given me a place my mind wants to go. The genre allowed me to write a story that brought together past, present and future into a single narrative. I reached far for the threads and brought them into a close weave. It allowed me to explore elements of historical fiction as well. I wanted to take my favourite genres and blend them into a convincing whole. Ben and Jerry's have a new line of ice creams that blend two flavours in the same container and have a sauce in the middle. I am aiming for that kind of fun.



Sphinx: The Second Coming by James Thornton is available now from Barbican Press.

Details **Author:** Marcus Sedgwick **Publisher:** Orion Books **Price:** £10.99 **Released:** Out now

THE GHOSTS OF HEAVEN

Circling the drain

It's more admirable to fail at greatness than to succeed at mediocrity. This is a risk Marcus Sedgwick has taken with *The Ghosts Of Heaven*, but sadly it's one that hasn't paid off.

The Ghosts Of Heaven is split into four 100-page segments, each entailing a story set in a different place and time. Apparently they can be read in any order.

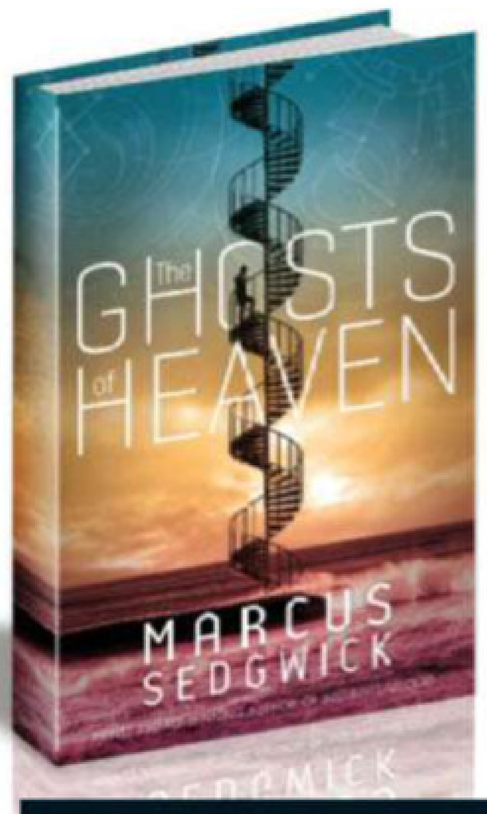
It's an interesting concept that takes guts to even attempt, but sadly doesn't quite work. It's all very well having four semi-simultaneous stories, but if none of them are especially compelling then it largely defeats the object.

Quarter one, 'Whispers In The Dark', is written as a patience-stretching, long-form poem lacking in rhyme or rhythm, and is a terrible choice as an opener (we recommend putting one last).

But the real killer is quarter two, 'The Witch In The Water', about an uninteresting young girl named Anna. Living in an era of religious zeal, her mother has only just passed away when a cruel witch hunter comes to town and singles her out as a suspect.

Multiple plot threads dangle in this section of the book, but Sedgwick's prose does little to elevate what could be a novelised prequel to *Downton Abbey*.

Sedgwick seasons the book with hints of intrigue then cuts them off at the knees; the recurring theme of circles and spirals would reach a fever pitch were they not lampshaded by dictionary definitions in the prologue and Anna herself drawing attention to their reoccurrence.



"IT'S AN INTERESTING CONCEPT THAT TAKES GUTS TO ATTEMPT"

It's hard to fault Sedgwick for trying to do something different, and it is fascinating in theory – it's just a shame that it fails to live up to its conceit.

Gareth Hughes

VERDICT ★★☆☆☆



IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...

Cloud Atlas
David Mitchell
Mitchell's epic, multi-stranded novel flows through six distinct yet interlinking stories.

Writer: Lavie Tidhar **Publisher:** Hodder & Stoughton **Price:** £18.99 **Released:** Out now

A MAN LIES DREAMING

Sleep it off

There's something both incredibly inspiring yet terribly sad about *A Man Lies Dying*. The story follows a fascist dictator named Wolf after he's fallen from grace, trying to make a living as a private detective in London while his home country succumbs to Communism.
In an almost ironic plot that weaves between stark realism, unexpected kinky S&M and dry humour, Wolf finds himself hunting for the lost daughter of a Jewish millionaire, stumbling unwittingly into an underworld of anti-Semitic crime led by his former Nazi associates.

And yet it's all an elaborate fantasy. The real story centres around Shomer, a Jewish prisoner at Auschwitz who dreams up this alternate reality of this dictator's downfall to escape from the despair and loneliness of a life that was stripped away from him.

The relationship between both the reality and the fantasy is perfectly intertwined. What starts out as a means of revenge becomes a futile attempt to give Wolf some kind of compassion .

A Man Lies Dreaming is an unusual take on Holocaust fiction, but there's almost nothing to criticise. The fantasy reality Tidhar provides is plausible; the inclusion of real-life Nazi figures such as Joseph Goebbels and Hermann Göring seeks to convince the reader.

There's no denying that it's a compelling read, but you can't help but become aware of the increasingly inevitable ending for both characters. It's with a heavy heart that you'll find yourself turning the last few pages, and it's not simply down to reaching the end of the book.



Philippa Grafton

VERDICT ★★★★★



IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...

Look Who's Back
Timur Vermes
Hitler wakes up in 2011 with no memory of how he got there. Controversially comedic.

WITNESS
THE POWER
OF
Revival

The electrifying new novel from Stephen King

KING. FOR A REASON.

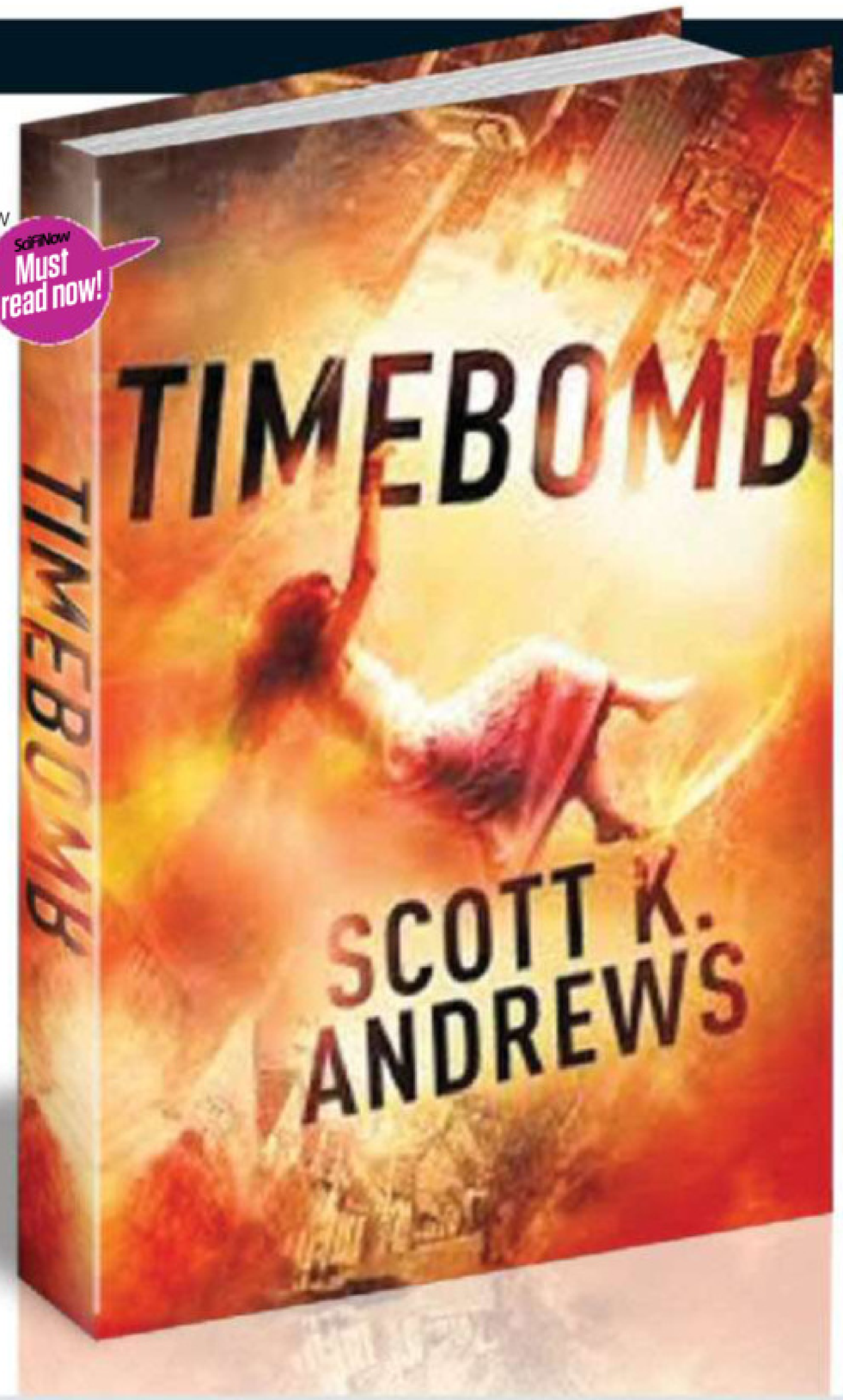
COMING 11.11.2014

/stephenkingbooks

Details **Author:** Scott K Andrews **Publisher:** Hodder & Stoughton **Price:** £14.99 **Released:** Out now

TIMEBOMB

Didn't your mother ever tell you not to touch?



There is something very *Doctor Who*-esque about *TimeBomb*. First of all, it is full of wibbly, wobbly, timey-wimey stuff. Then there is the small matter of a simple touch that can send you spiralling into a different year, decade or even century. Clever folk start talking of paradoxes, and older versions of people appear in front of their younger selves. But calm yourselves; this isn't the work of Steven Moffat (there isn't a Weeping Angel in sight), but it is just as worthy.

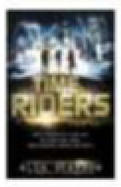
Author Scott K Andrews delivers a baffling but beefy opening chunk to his *TimeBomb* trilogy that centres around three teenagers' past, present and future. Dora, Kaz and Jana are flung together for reasons they cannot fathom, their only connection being the very pantomime-esque baddie Lord Sweetclover, who has collected them from their respective time periods and deposited them in his lab. Coming from 1640, Dora struggles to comical effect at the technology, hygiene, language and chocolate that she encounters. There is little time to adjust as a shape-shifting man, known only as Steve, arrives to rescue the time-travelling trio. Dora is initially thrilled to be reunited with her own century – but unfortunately for her, Jana and Kaz, they arrive slap-bang in the middle of the Civil War.

As with most trilogies, there are very few answers in this first novel. In fact, it unfolds much like an episode of *24*, as when one crisis is avoided, another rocks up to take its place. Normally, this would be hugely frustrating, but here it aids the fast tempo and paces the narrative.

As well as being an entertaining read, *TimeBomb* and its cross-curricular genre could potentially be of value to secondary school teachers the world over, containing history, science and literature in one neat little package.

Claire Nicholls

VERDICT ★★★★☆



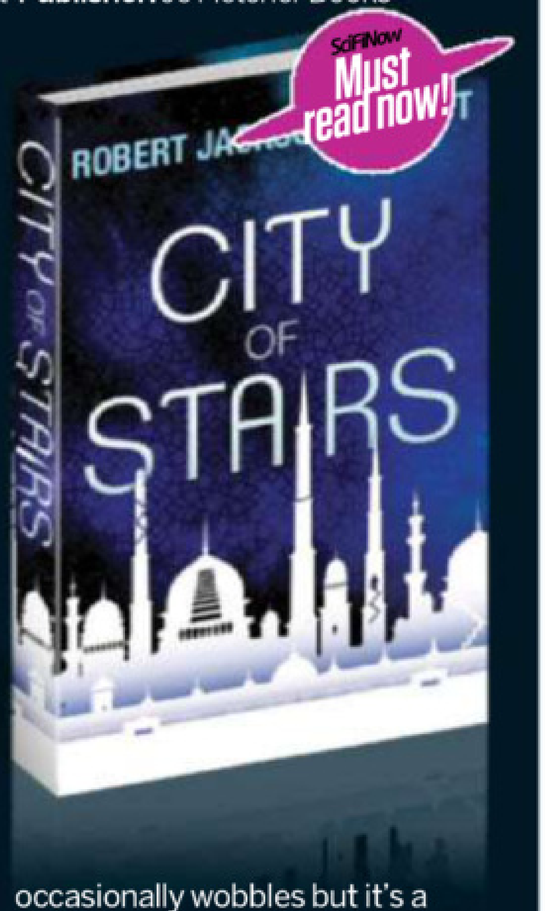
IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...

TimeRiders
Alex Scarrow
Liam, Maddy and Alex escape death and become recruits of an agency that fixes broken history.

Details **Author:** Robert Jackson Bennett **Publisher:** Jo Fletcher Books **Price:** £20 **Released:** Out now

CITY OF STAIRS

Gods and monsters



The author of *Mr Shivers* and *The Troupe* continues to impress, delivering his most ambitious novel to date. Years ago, Saypur conquered the Continent after killing their gods. Now, the Saypurians control their neighbours and forbid them to mention their dead deities. So when a professor studying them is murdered, it's a big problem.

With a beautifully detailed world, a rich history of wars, tribes, gods and monsters and a fantastic lead character in brittle but determined investigator Shara Thivani, *City Of Stairs* is an immersive and hugely entertaining fantasy. Shara's attempts to navigate the scheming politicians and dangerous fanatics, all the while unsure of her superiors' agenda, makes for compelling reading, and Bennett keeps things moving. The balance between noir thriller and fantasy occasionally wobbles but it's a very minor quibble. Finally, there's Shara's giant bodyguard Sigrud, a taciturn gent with a tremendous capacity for violence and a bone-dry sense of humour. We'd give it a must-read just for him.

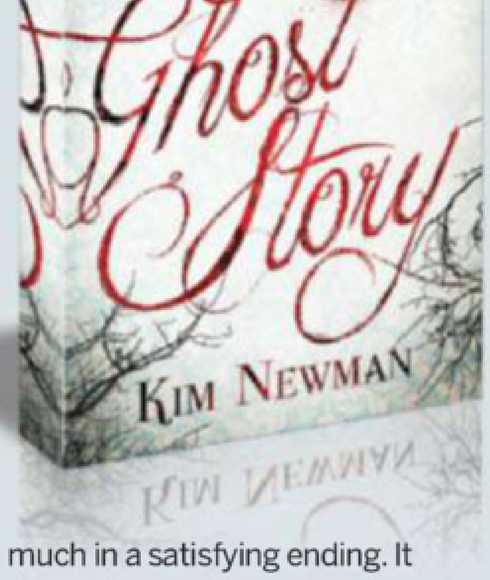
Jonathan Hatfull

VERDICT ★★★★★

Details **Author:** Kim Newman **Publisher:** Titan Books **Price:** £7.99 **Released:** Out now

AN ENGLISH GHOST STORY

Freaky family drama



With a literal description of the book for a title, you'd expect the ghosts to show up pretty early on into *An English Ghost Story*. In reality, nothing supernatural really kicks off until somewhere around page 150 (out of 291). It's mostly irritating family drama and scene setting until then.

After that point, the ghosts finally arrive and a grand old house in Somerset tries to kill a dysfunctional family of four. The family in question are as irritating as their drama, but that fact lends itself to an interesting dynamic and tension between them.

An English Ghost Story doesn't set any new bars in the world of haunted-house horror stories and it doesn't particularly make you think anything beyond "Well, that's weird." But it's entertaining enough and evolves into something fairly disturbing. Just don't invest too much in a satisfying ending. It tries to be sentimental and profound in a way that feels out of place, and results in something entirely underwhelming.

Poppy-Jay Palmer

VERDICT ★★☆☆☆

Deep below the University,
there is a dark place.
Few people know of it: a broken
web of ancient passageways
and abandoned rooms.
A young woman lives there.

Her name is Auri,
and she is full of mysteries . . .



From *Sunday Times* bestselling author

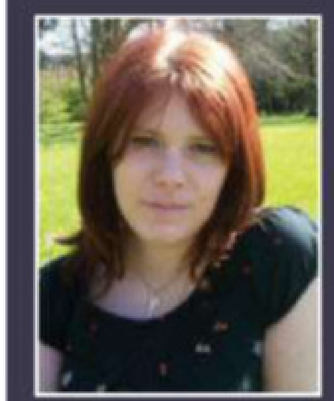
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RJ Truman



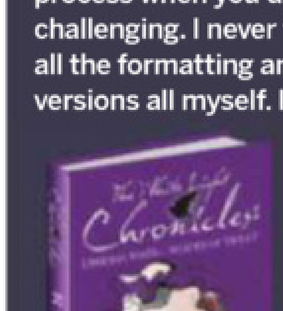
How would you pitch *The White Light Chronicles* to a first-time reader?
I would say that *The White Light Chronicles* are fantasy stories aimed at adults more so than children. They contain many different elements of fantasy in them, from elves and vampires to gods and goddesses. I even have unicorns in there, so there is something for everyone.

What drew you to Adrianna, the heroine of *Blue Like My Heart*?
Adrianna is very exciting and complex. Although she lives in the Under World, she questions its existence, and in doing so ends up living as a human. It's her living this life that gives the main vampire in the story the idea that he wants to go to Earth.

Do you enjoy the collision of fantasy and the real world?
I find it very interesting trying to mix elements of the real world with the fantasy one. I try as much as possible to put the reader in the characters' shoes. That way it allows them to get a feeling for what the characters must be going through. For example, I might start a story in the real world, and just when you feel comfortable there, I transport you to the fantasy one. That way it's as much of a shock for the readers as it is the characters.

> "I TRY TO PUT THE READER IN THE CHARACTERS' SHOES"

How have you found the experience of self-publishing?
Self-publishing is an interesting experience; it's allowed me to have complete control over how I want the books to look, both inside and out. It's a very time-consuming process when you do it all yourself, and very challenging. I never thought I would be doing all the formatting and making the Kindle versions all myself. I'm very lucky, though, to have a friend who is a very talented artist – she has designed the last few book covers for me. That has been a real blessing.



Blue Like My Heart and *The White Light Chronicles* are available to buy from Amazon.

Details **Writer:** David Cronenberg **Publisher:** Fourth Estate Books **Price:** £8.99 **Released:** Out now

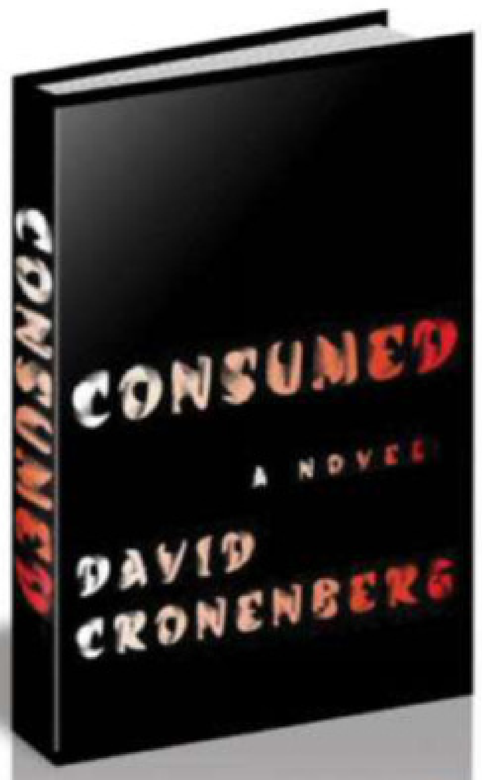
CONSUMED

Appetite for knowledge

David Cronenberg's first novel contains many of the elements that his fans will know and love. Devotees of his earlier work will be pleased to hear that there's plenty of body horror here, presented with the detachment of JG Ballard (who he famously adapted for the screen with *Crash*) and the occasional lengthy diversion into fetishistic detail that recalls Bret Easton Ellis.

Consumed tells the story of Naomi and Nathan, a pair of photojournalists who find their relationship strained when they take on different assignments. He goes to Bucharest to document a surgeon conducting unorthodox breast surgery on a cancer patient, while she heads to Paris to find out about a philosopher accused of killing and eating his wife.

Fans of the director will find much to enjoy, but it's hard to say whether newcomers will want to stomach this combination of body horror, unusual eroticism and pornographic descriptions of technology. We would certainly recommend trying this.



> "FANS OF THE DIRECTOR WILL FIND MUCH TO ENJOY"

Both find themselves drawn deep into these engrossing stories, pushing them into areas of curiosity – both psychological and sexual – that disturb them. As connections become apparent, things only get more complicated.

As noted, the novel begins in what feels like familiar territory. Nathan's concurrent interests (professional, artistic, sexual and emotional) in the cancer patient feel reminiscent of *Videodrome*'s Max

Jonathan Hatfull

VERDICT ★★★☆☆



IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...

Super-Cannes
JG Ballard
Philosophy, violence and wealth come under Ballard's keen eye in this underrated novel.

Details **Writer:** Jonathan Green **Publisher:** Snowbooks Ltd **Price:** £40 **Released:** Out now

YOU ARE THE HERO

The Story of Firetop Mountain

For a certain generation, the idea that gamebooks are some amusing retro curio comes as a profound shock.

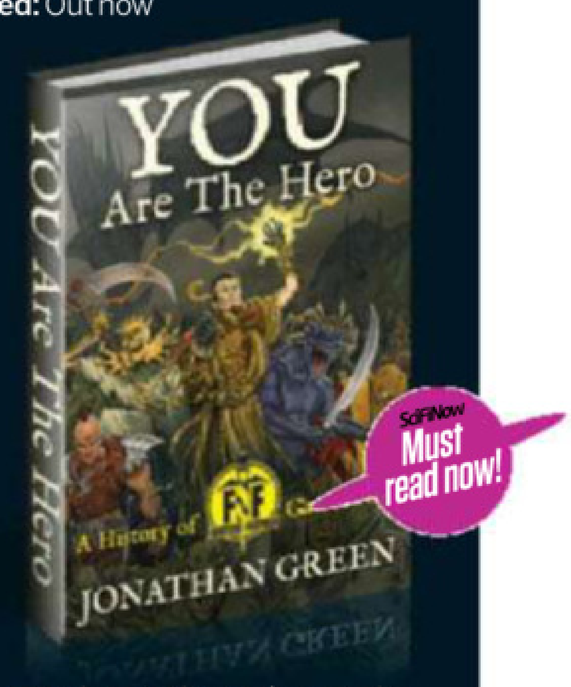
Ian Livingstone and Steve Jackson's prolific *Fighting Fantasy* range took *Dungeons & Dragons* tropes into bedrooms otherwise dominated by Subbuteo, and set thousands of young things across the Eighties and early Nineties off on a journey into genre.

Funded on KickStarter by *FF* contributor Jonathan Green (*Spellbreaker*, *Curse Of The Mummy*), luscious coffee-table tome *You Are The Hero: A History Of Fighting Fantasy Gamebooks* is a surprisingly comprehensive look at the birth of the range, its legacy and its pop-culture explosion.

Filled with tangents into the artwork, a glimpse at the books that didn't make it, side projects and the core duo's careers in videogame development, the first such swerve into esotery is a bit of a change from the otherwise chronological approach. Soon, however, it's as welcome as a magic item in a goblin's underpants.

Thorough and passionate, the use of fan-voices throughout is a consequence of the book's crowd-funded origin, and won't suit all tastes. There's also a few awkward moments where Green effectively interviews himself, although in fairness to do otherwise would be to paint an incomplete picture.

As immersive as its subject matter, with great characters, amazing stories and a surprise behind every door, *You Are The Hero* is a vital chronicle of one of popular culture's too-long unadorned milestones.



James Hoare

VERDICT ★★★★★



IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...

Dicing With Dragons
Ian Livingstone
Livingstone's 1982 introduction to role playing is a fascinating primer.

"THE BEST WEREWOLF NOVELS I VÈ READ IN YEARS!" ★★★★★

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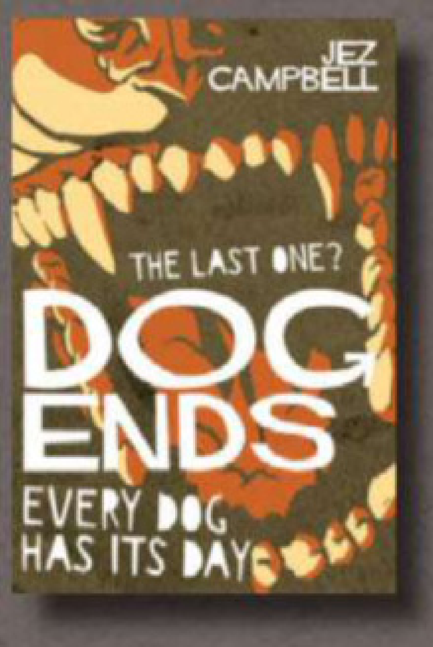
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THE HUNGER GAMES MEETS THE HOWLING

IT'S FIFTEEN YEARS AFTER DOGSTAR. THE WORLD'S GONE TO THE DOGS. AMY'S SCRATCHING OUT A LIVING, SCAVENGING BY DAY AND LAYING LOW BY NIGHT. BUT WHEN SHE PICKS A FIGHT WITH THE WRONG PACK, SHE KNOWS THINGS'LL HAVE TO CHANGE ...

OUT NOW



MAD MAX MEETS THE WOLF MAN

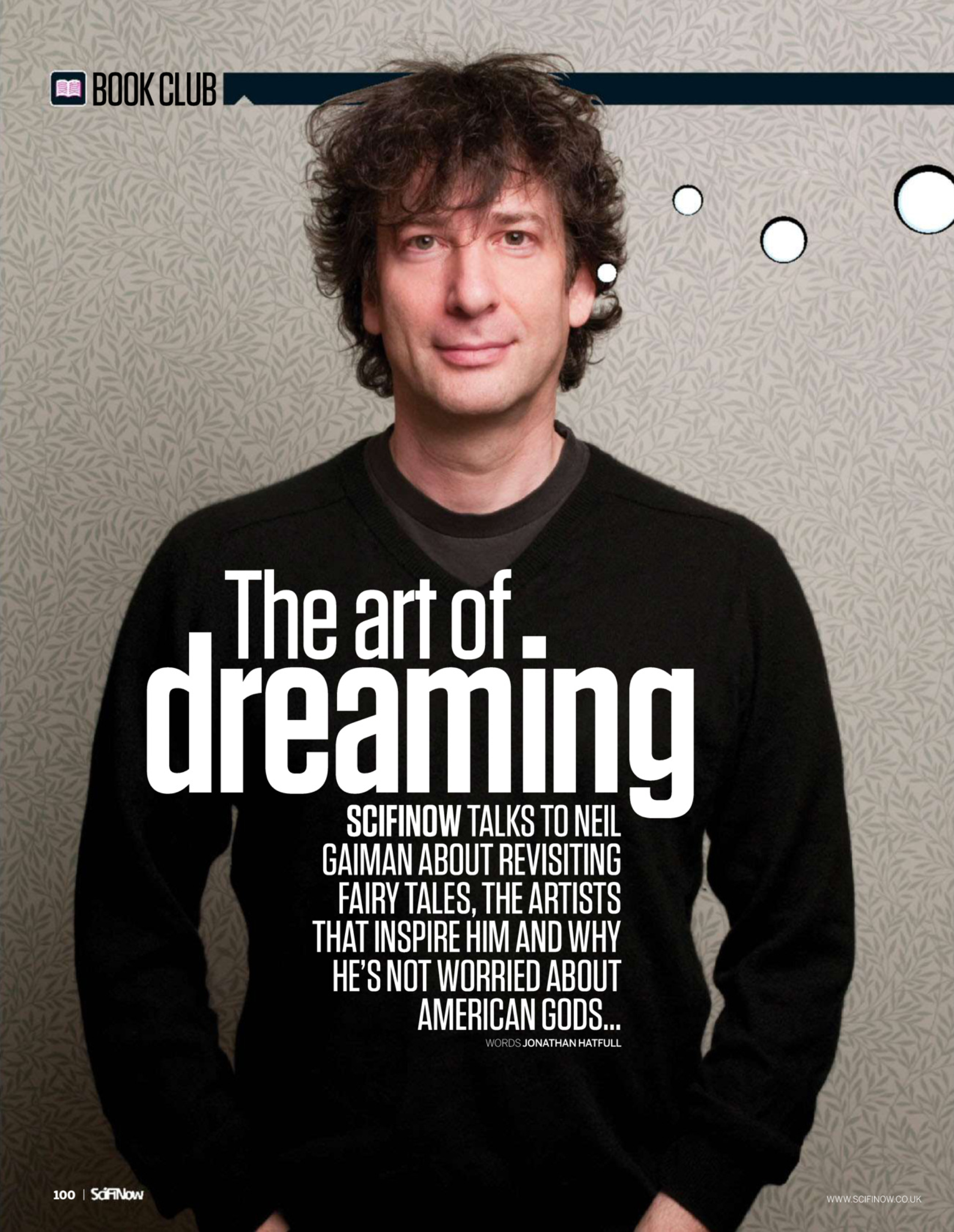
IT'S LOOKING A LOT LIKE THE END OF THE WORLD BUT, WHILE LONDON BURNS, SOMETHING'S STIRRING BENEATH THE STREETS. THE DOGSTAR'S BACK, AND NOW HE'S GOT A REAL FIRE IN HIS BELLY...

COMING SOON

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The art of dreaming

SCIFINOW TALKS TO NEIL GAIMAN ABOUT REVISITING FAIRY TALES, THE ARTISTS THAT INSPIRE HIM AND WHY HE'S NOT WORRIED ABOUT AMERICAN GODS...

WORDS **JONATHAN HATFULL**



o you haven't seen the really cool ones..."

We're nervous enough to be talking to Neil Gaiman, the undisputed king of modern fantasy, about *The Sleeper And The Spindle*, his new children's book and collaboration with brilliant illustrator Chris Riddell, but we've also chosen to admit that the version we've read was missing some key artwork. Fortunately, the author of *American Gods* and *The Ocean At The End Of The Lane* is more than happy to show off Riddell's incredible work, laying out the pages on the table in the hotel's deeply lovely library room and thumbing through to find his favourites. "He is so clever," he enthuses. "He is a genius, and he makes me look good."

We last spoke to Gaiman almost exactly a year ago when he was promoting his previous collaboration with Riddell, *Fortunately The Milk*, and he tells us that Riddell quickly came to mind for this new tale. "I had originally written [the story] for an anthology where they'd asked me, 'Would you like to do a story that's based on or applied to another story?' And I went, 'Mmm. Yeah... I'll do *Sleeping Beauty*,'" he tells us. "I had this story in my head, and told it, and when it was done sent it over to my editor saying, 'I just did this thing. Do we think that it could be a book? Maybe with Chris?' And she sent it to Chris, and we got back an immediate 'Absolutely yes.'

"What amazed us all was that Chris basically did all this in a couple of months. He just stopped doing everything else and did this. 'How? How did you do this? These drawings of such amazing detail!' I love working with him."

Riddell is the latest in a long line of incredible artists and illustrators to bring Gaiman's unique visions to life. Ever since starting out with the inimitable Dave McKean on graphic novels like *Violent Cases* and *Mr Punch*, Gaiman tells us that the collaboration between author and artist has been one of the most important aspects of his identity, "Yeah, I've been really, really lucky, and it's honestly been the best bit of being a writer."

"I suppose it goes back to starting out in comics; I've always cared about my illustrators. I always wanted to have fantastic illustrators that I enjoyed working with, and I always have. Dave is brilliant. There's nobody like Dave McKean; Dave is unique, a star. Just fantastic. He never does anything like what I expect. Chris reminds me a bit of [*Stardust* illustrator] Charles Vess in that he always does kind of what I expect, but he always does it different and better. Dave just surprises me. I'll say 'Dave, we're doing this,' and what I get back is nothing like anything I've ever seen before. It's even true when you compare books by Dave. It's all different. So Dave always surprises me. Chris doesn't surprise me; he just gives me the perfect thing which is kind of different."

McKean and Riddell are certainly two of the names that first spring to mind when we think of Gaiman's artists. McKean's work on *The Sandman* covers played



a huge part in creating the series' identity, while Riddell has provided illustrations for some of Gaiman's best-loved books, including *The Graveyard Book* and the latest edition of *Coraline* (McKean having illustrated the first). However, over the course of his career as a writer, whether it's novels or comics, Gaiman has worked with an incredible array of artists that reads like a wish-list.

"The biggest difference, I suppose, is that now I can work with anybody I want," he tells us. "On the other hand, the lucky thing that I've been in for years is that I've been able to work with anyone I want to! I got to work with amazing people when I was young. When I started out I had Dave McKean as my first artist... kind of spoils you. And in my 20s and early 30s working on *Sandman*, I got to work with everyone: I got to work with Jeff Jones and Bill Sienkiewicz, I had a Frank Miller cover, all this cool stuff. The only comics person that I never really got to work with was Moebius. I wrote a story that he was meant to have drawn [the Death and Destiny stories in *Sandman* follow-up *Endless Nights*], and his health wasn't up to it. Apart from that, the only artists that I wanted to work with but failed to tended to be because they died. *Coraline*, I'd always wanted to be drawn by Edward Gorey. And they announced the news of Edward Gorey's death the day I finished writing *Coraline*, which meant I got Dave McKean. These days I also have Chris Riddell, he's great."

"CHRIS JUST GIVES ME THE PERFECT THING, WHICH IS ALSO DIFFERENT"

NEIL GAIMAN

Aside from reuniting Gaiman and Riddell, *The Sleeper And The Spindle* also sees Gaiman returning to the world of fairy tales. A spin on both *Snow White* and *Sleeping Beauty*, it's sort of a sequel and a fresh spin and gives both characters a lot more agency then they're used to. It's the kind of storytelling that Gaiman is known and celebrated for, and which has seen an incredible revival recently in film, television and fiction. However, rather than take credit for it, Gaiman is keen to highlight the influence of another celebrated writer.

"I think there's a whole beautiful, powerful river that's happened," he explains. "You have Angela Carter starting it all in many ways. She was, I think, the first adult author to go back and look at fairy tales as just these powerful things. And the stories that obsessed her – *Bluebeard, Red Riding Hood* – she took, dressed up and reinvented, and she gave back to us. There was nobody like Angela Carter. I was definitely one of the people who was there mucking around just before it all got big. That may have had something to do with my obsession with Angela Carter. I don't know that I would have done *Sleeper And The Spindle* five years ago, because it felt like retold and reconfigured fairy stories were everywhere. But on the other hand, there was part of me that just started thinking about *Sleeping Beauty*."

While Sleeping Beauty is at the centre of the book's mystery, it's Snow White who sets out to find out exactly



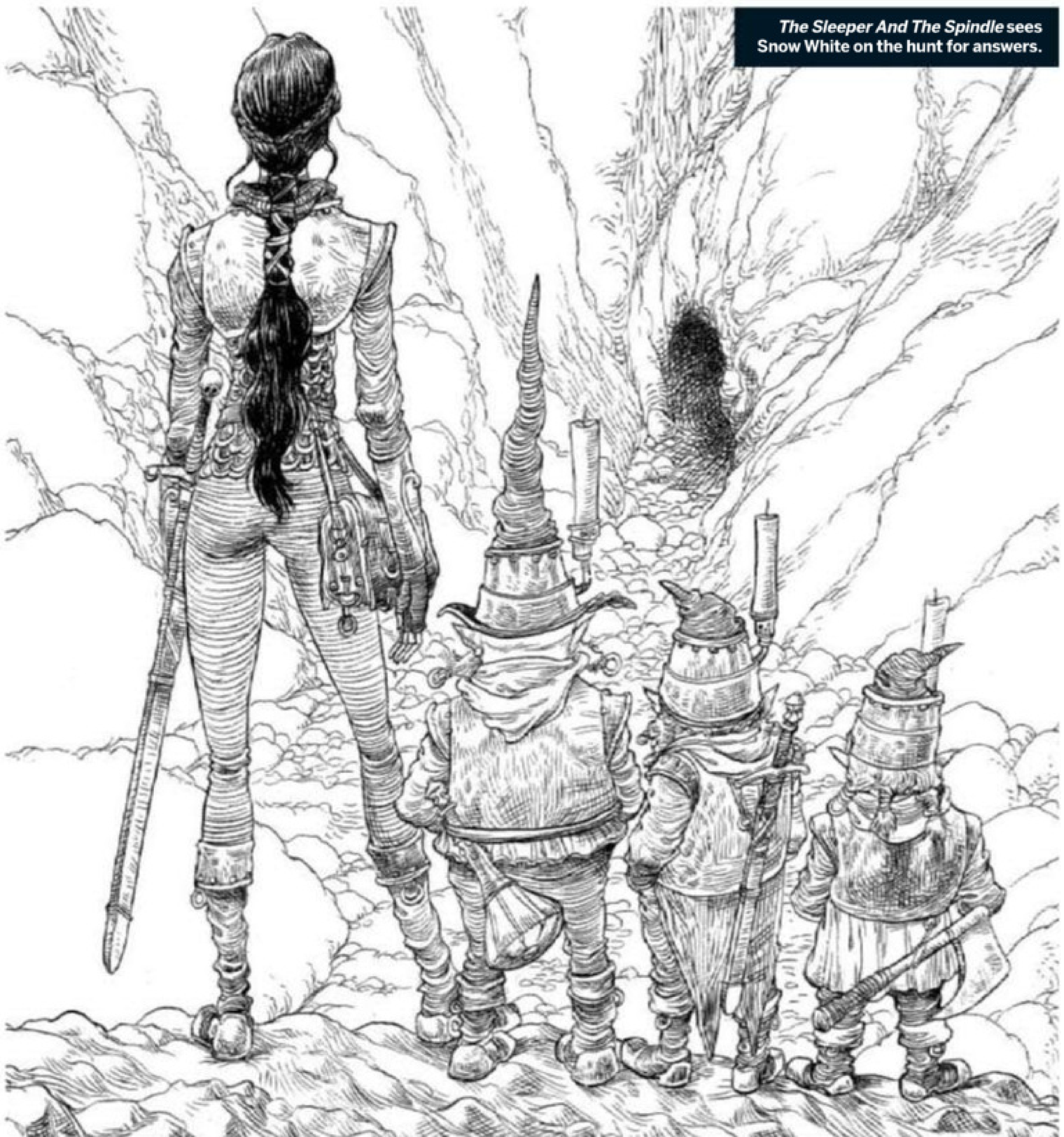
what is going on in this sleeping kingdom, and her determination to find the truth and her resilience to the kind of usual bag of evil magic tricks makes her a formidable heroine. "I like stories best in which women rescue themselves, and I've never been very fond of stories in which men rescue women," Gaiman tells us. "I quite like stories in which women rescue men. *Neverwhere* I quite like because it starts out with a man rescuing a woman, and you watch the trouble he gets into for having done that, and then essentially it becomes something very, very different. But mostly I love strong, sensible women. I think from my point of view the most important thing is to try and create a broad enough body of work that if somebody says, 'But you did this,' you can say 'Yeah, but I also did that.' And that for me is kind of huge. I like the fact that *Coraline* is a book about a girl who rescues herself and her family. *The Graveyard Book* is a book about a boy who grows up in a graveyard, and there are strong women in *The Graveyard Book*, but it's Bod's book. And there are several male characters in *Coraline*, but it's her book. I'm good with that."

Fairy tales aside, with the TV series of *American Gods* and *Anansi Boys*, and the film adaptation of *The Sandman* finally moving ahead, Gaiman has been at the centre of a lot of frenzied anticipation, which he says has pretty much been brewing for nearly 25 years. "My first ever meeting on a *Sandman* movie, I think, was 1991," he remembers. "I remember asking the executive in question not to make the movie, and she was completely baffled. She said that was the first time anybody had ever come into her office and asked her *not* to make a film."

He's enthusiastic about the choice of *The Fades* writer Jack Thorne as screenwriter ("He's brilliant. He's so funny,"), and excited that Bryan Fuller will be bringing the same smarts and sensitivity to *American Gods* that he did to *Hannibal*. "I love the fact that I'm working with Bryan on *American Gods*. One of the first things he did was say, 'Okay, so it's a very male book' – which it is – 'So what I want to do is make this character an absolutely up-front one of the primary characters.' And I went, 'That is absolutely brilliant.' He said, 'Episode three is going to be hers.' I said 'I'm there with you. That's fantastic.' He gets it. He's smart. And more than that, he's enthusiastic and bright… a weird combination."

However, as exciting as all these developments are, Gaiman is keen to stress that television is not a medium he feels driven to provide for. "No. I really don't!" he

"I LOVE THE FACT THAT I'M WORKING WITH BRYAN FULLER ON AMERICAN GODS" NEIL GAIMAN



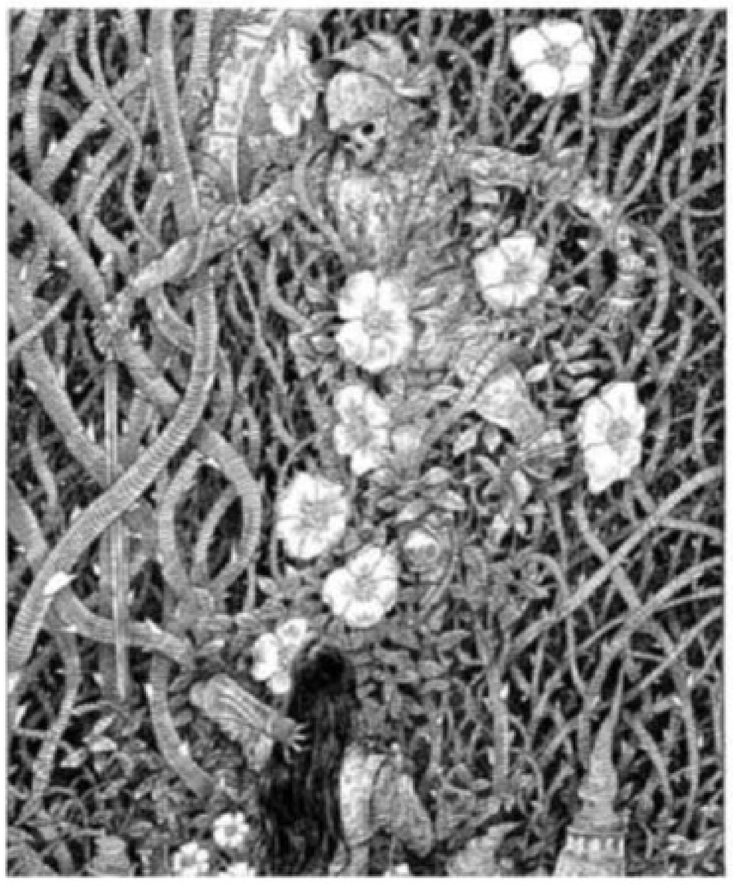
***The Sleeper And The Spindle* sees Snow White on the hunt for answers.**

laughs. "I don't get up in the morning and go, 'Oh my god! I've got to do a television show!' Back in 1996, a big American production company came to me and said, 'We want you to do a science fiction story for us.' And I put together this big science fiction story, which was basically kind of like *Lost*, but in space, and they said, 'You know, we don't think there's going to be any interest in science fiction or weird shit. Let's do something else'. And I put together a big pitch for something that was a lot like a *Game Of Thrones*-y kind of thing, and they looked at it and explained why nobody was ever going to want to watch television like that, and they gave me the rights back. Ten years later, I'm going, 'Both of those things, just fine! All they were was a little bit ahead of their time, and they were ahead of their time because you were looking around and not seeing anything like that.' Now I've got people coming to me and saying, 'Hey, those things, we remembered them, do you want to do them?' And I'm saying, 'No, there's lots of stuff like that now. Why would I want to do it?'"

Apart from anything else, Gaiman tells us that he has his hands full, including two more "short-ish" children's books before a *Graveyard Book*-sized one. "But there's adult novels that need to be written before that," he tells us. "I don't know, it's not like I have a career plan or any kind of plan really; I just have stuff. Stories that I want to tell, and I'm lucky I get to do them." As are we.



The Sleeper And The Spindle is available in hardback from Bloomsbury Childrens Books from 23 October.





Top: It's a game of thorns for Snow.
Above: The art is by turns weird and wonderful.

The artists of Neil Gaiman

10 OF THE FINEST ARTISTS TO TACKLE THE DREAM LORD'S WORK

DAVE MCKEAN

McKean's covers for *The Sandman* are an integral part of the series' identity, conjuring the mystery and spirit of the story. Any collaboration between the two is a very special thing.



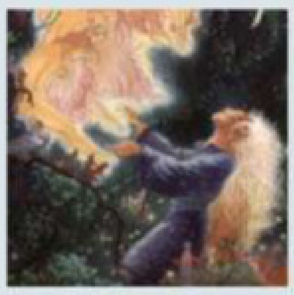
CHRIS RIDDELL

Riddell has beautifully brought Gaiman's children's books to life, whether it's the joyful fantasy smorgasbord of *Fortunately The Milk* or the haunting beauty of *The Graveyard Book*.



CHARLES VESS

Vess collaborated with Gaiman on *The Books Of Magic* and *The Sandman*, but their most memorable was *Stardust*, where the artist wonderfully rendered the classical landscape.



JH WILLIAMS

Williams was chosen by Gaiman to help him resurrect *The Sandman* with *Overture*, and his work is spectacular; full of bold contrasts and glorious movement.



JOHN BOLTON

Bolton worked on Gaiman's *The Books Of Magic*, the story of a young boy discovering a magical world, and created a startling combination of realism and bewitching fantasy.



YOSHITAKA AMANO

The legendary Japanese artist worked on the impossibly beautiful *The Sandman: Dream Hunters* novella, which told the story of a Buddhist monk who falls in love with a fox spirit.



ANDY KUBERT

Having collaborated with Kubert on *Marvel 1602*, Gaiman worked with him on *Whatever Happened To The Caped Crusader*, asking him to channel classic *Batman* artists for the memorial.



MARK HEMPEL

There's no definitive style for *The Sandman*, but Hempel's work on *The Kindly Ones* was a bold and dynamic addition to the series, giving the tragic storyline energy and a sense of danger.



JILL THOMPSON

Thompson's work on the *Sandman* story *Brief Lives* is truly exceptional, but her towering achievement may be Li'l Dream and Li'l Death in *Fables And Reflections*.



BILL SIENKIEWICZ

The Sandman collection *Endless Nights* is almost a who's who of incredible artists, but Sienkiewicz's work on the Delirum story 'Going Inside' is perhaps the most memorable.



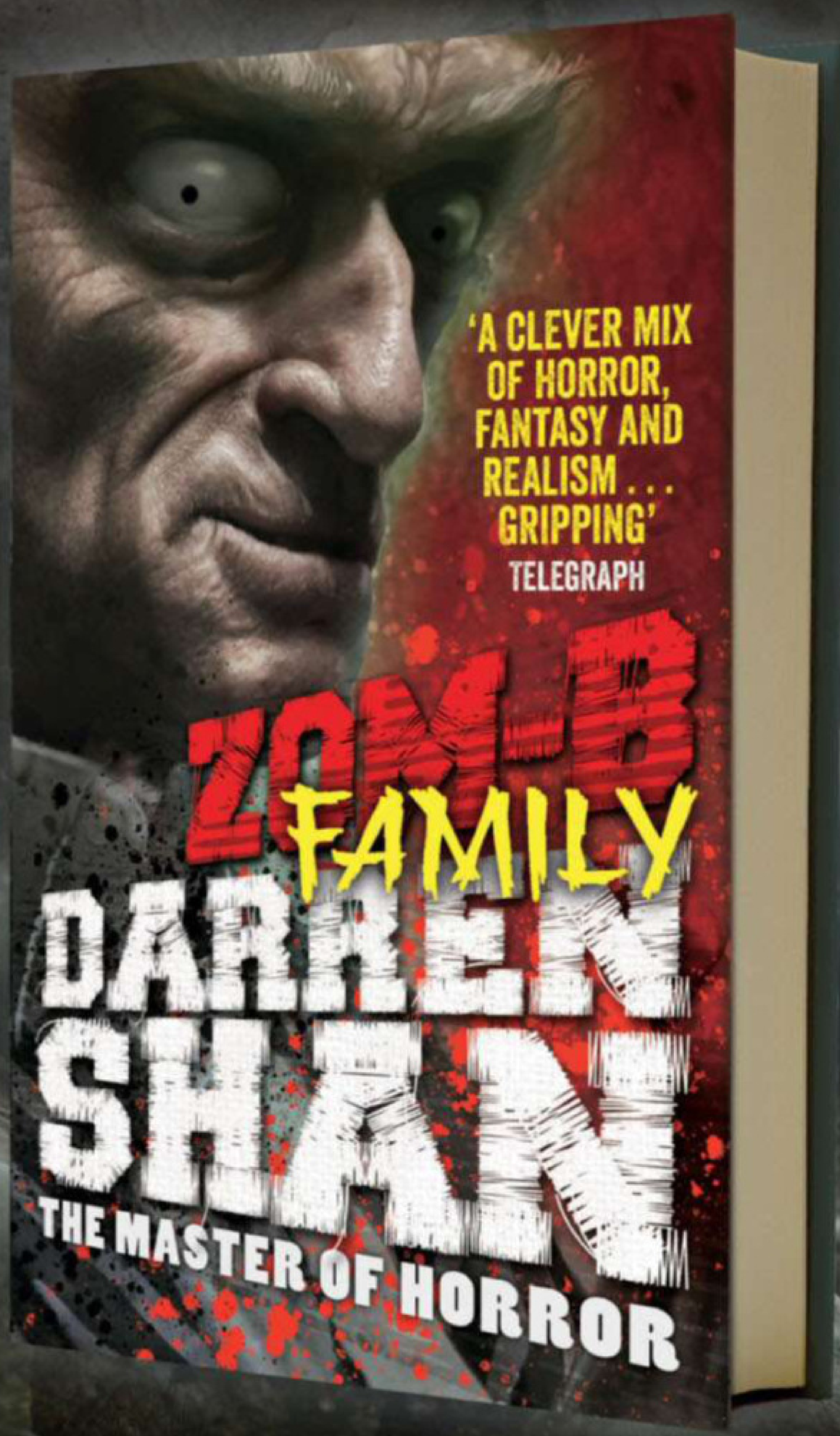


Chris Riddell's artwork captures the character of the dwarves.

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118

FLASHBACK
BEHIND THE FOG
HOW JOHN CARPENTER CREATED A HORROR CLASSIC 120

COMPLETE GUIDE
SEX AND ZOMBIES
THE MAD WORLD OF JESS FRANCO 106

RETRO CLASSIC
RETURN TO NEVERLAND
WE REMEMBER ROBIN WILLIAMS IN HOOK 114

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THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO JESS FRANCO

EUROPE'S MOST UNDER-APPRECIATED HORROR MASTER MADE ALMOST 200 MOVIES IN HIS LIFETIME. SCIFINOW INVESTIGATES THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE UGLY WORLD OF LATE EXPLOITATION MASTER JESS FRANCO…

WORDS **CALUM WADDELL**

Born on 30 May 1930 in Madrid, Spain, Jess Franco (or Jesús Franco to his closest compatriots) was – for most of his life – lambasted as a quick-buck merchant: a continental hack that churned out an entire cottage industry of cheap and cheesy sex 'n' carnage. Yet, in 2009, the great man was awarded with an honourary Goya (the Spanish Oscar) for his achievements in cinema, while Peter Strickland, director of *Berberian Sound Studio* (2012), will soon be paying tribute to Franco's cinema with his erotic drama *Duke Of Burgundy*. Add to this a new book, *Pornodelic Pleasures* by Jack Hunter, and Blu-ray debuts for a number of the Mediterranean maverick's most famous motion pictures, and it is clear that there is something of a resurgence of the filmmaker's work.

Having passed away on 2 April 2013, just over a year after his wife – and frequent muse – Lina Romay died, Franco at least lived to experience his iconic status. Moreover, he also got to see Spanish genre films enjoy a new lease of life thanks to such contemporary hits as *[REC]* (2007) and the Guillermo del Toro-produced *Julia's Eyes* (2010). Del Toro himself admits to being an avid Franco-phile, and these more upmarket shockers certainly owe their lineage to the industry that Franco instigated way back in 1962 with his stylish monochrome masterpiece *The Awful Dr Orloff*.

Prior to *Dr Orloff*, and the same year's *The Sadistic Baron Von Klaus*, Franco had helmed some unassuming Madrid-based comedies, but it was his stylish black-and-white fright flicks that saw him come to national – and later international – prominence. Ultimately, on the strength of such works, Franco was hired by none other than Orson Welles to work as his second unit director on *Chimes At Midnight* (1966). Top American critic Pauline Kael would go so far as to single out the battle sequences in *Chimes At Midnight* as being superior to anything in Welles' *Citizen Kane* (1941). Doubtless Franco had a smile on his face when receiving this news: he – and not Welles – had been the one calling the shots on these scenes.



"DURING THE REIGN OF GENERAL FRANCISCO FRANCO, HORROR MOVIES WERE JUST A WAY OF GETTING AROUND CENSORSHIP"

JACK TAYLOR



With *The Awful Dr Orloff*, though, Franco showed further evidence of his filmmaking potential. Drawing his influence from the French splatter-satire *Eyes Without A Face* (1960), Franco's feature headlines Euro-trash veteran Howard Vernon as the titular terror – a demented plastic surgeon whose daughter is horribly disfigured. Vernon cruises the streets of Paris at night to find a beautiful woman whose face can be grafted onto his unfortunate spawn's profile. A stylish, coherent and frequently expressionistic horror epic, *The Awful Dr Orloff* – which boasts some stunning cinematography from veteran photographer Godofredo Pacheco – is one of its director's classiest and most essential efforts.

Interestingly, it was that other Franco – General Francisco – who allowed Jess to break into this sort of commercial fare in the first place. In the early Sixties, the totalitarian Madrid government had decided to increase its support for film production – largely as part of an attempt to bring finance into the country. It was a smart move: in more liberal European nations such as France, Portugal, West Germany and Switzerland, Spanish genre pictures began to fill space in cinemas. Indeed, *The Awful Dr Orloff* – which also introduced viewers to its director's fixation with pumping jazz onto his soundtracks – was co-produced with French financiers.

"At the time, the Spanish were making two kinds of movies," begins the American-born Madrid expat Jack Taylor, the star of several Franco films, beginning with 1967's classic *Succubus*. "There were the westerns – which every actor seemed to want to do, but I didn't – and horror, which I loved. Back then, during the reign of General Francisco Franco, these movies were just a way of getting around censorship, because you could film young ladies in miniskirts running around cemeteries.

"Of course, seeing that excited the viewers, but it all needed to be in there anyway as part of the plot," he laughs.

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ERIC VIELLARD
JEFF MONTGOMERY
HENRY LAMBERT
CHRISTIAN DRAGAUD

DANS
UN FILM DE
A.M. FRANK

MUSIQUE DE
DANIEL WHITE



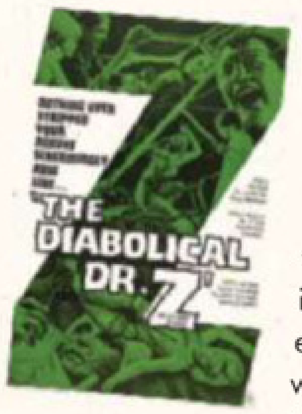
L'ABIME DES MORTS VIVANTS

EUROCINE PARIS

INTERDIT AUX MOINS DE 13 ANS

COMPLETE GUIDE TO
JESS FRANCO

Given the director's later reputation for sex and sleaze, Franco's fare during the Sixties is remarkably restrained. There was a sequel to his biggest hit: 1964's *The Secret Of Dr Orloff*, and another French co-production, *The Diabolical Dr Z* (1966), which was the filmmaker's last monochrome movie and a suitably sophisticated swansong. In fact, the point at which the 'new' Jess Franco appears arguably begins with the full-colour excess of the aforementioned *Succubus*, released in American theatres in 1969 as *Necronomicon*. At this point, Franco had hooked up with the Austrian producer Adrian Hoven, the man who would later mastermind the infamous torture-sickie *Mark Of The Devil* (1970). Hoven had a keen eye on the West German market, and hired Franco to helm *Succubus*, a sadomasochistic psycho-thriller that was filmed in Portugal and loosely adapted from a medieval book on occultism (hence the American name-swap to *Necronomicon*).



"I first met Jess socially," mentions Taylor, who plays the on-screen lover of the film's murderous leading lady, Janine Reynaud. "I had been working on another picture, and the cast and crew were out for dinner when he turned up. We began speaking, and he told me about his next film – *Succubus* – which was going to be shot in Lisbon. A few days later, he called me at my home in Madrid and asked me if I wanted to work on it. I was delighted, because I adore Lisbon, but unfortunately there was no script – just three pages of ideas. But that was how *Succubus* was produced, and it was banned in Spain. It was too much for the censors of that era – they could never show it. However, word began to surface about how racy it was, and someone even said to me, 'Jack, did you do a porno movie in Lisbon?'

Beginning with shots of semi-nude men strung up bondage-style against a dark background while Reynaud seduces, tortures and impales them (Franco then cuts to the reaction of a live audience – revealing that this has all been a stage performance), *Succubus* is a lushly shot suspenser with some dreamy set-design and colourful costumes. When it opened in the US, *Succubus* was hailed by Fritz Lang as "a beautiful piece of cinema", while influential critic Roger Ebert rated it as one of the year's worst releases – even lambasting Reynaud as "ugly".

Franco was polarising opinion – a trait that would continue throughout his career. "The first *Dr Orloff* was fairly successful in America as the first half of a double bill, but I don't think many people were connecting the dots about what was a Jess Franco film and what wasn't," states Tony Timpone, the former editor of *Fangoria* magazine. "*Fangoria* was the first magazine to popularise Jess Franco, because before that everyone thought of him as a European version of Ed Wood or something. Usually he was only mentioned as some sort of joke, but there was beauty in some of these beastly films that he was making. I think he had an eye for cinema, and maybe if he had more money to work with he would be a more acclaimed filmmaker."

Certainly, the work that Franco did with Hoven – including the sensationalistic-sounding but actually quite tame *Sadisterotica* (1967) and the wonderfully monikered *Kiss Me Monster* (1967) – was cheap but aesthetically appealing. However, when British B-movie mogul Harry Alan Towers wanted a slice of Franco's box-office appeal (*Succubus* had been one of the top 50-grossing movies in the US during 1969), a more rigidly commercial director began to surface.

"Jess was someone who was miserable if he was not shooting something," admits Taylor. "But usually he would be bored after the first day on the set and his mind would begin to wander. He would usually come up with another idea and want to start working on something else. With Harry Alan Towers, though, that was when he *had* to have a full script and be a lot more prepared. There was more money being invested in these films. I did two pictures with Harry and Jess: *Count Dracula* and *Eugenie, The Story Of Her Journey Into Perversion* – and both of them had Christopher Lee as the leading man."

Beginning with the Towers-produced *The Blood Of Fu Manchu* (1967) and its hurriedly shot sequel *The Castle Of Fu Manchu* (1967), Franco struck up an unlikely relationship with the conservative Lee, who – generally – was looking to leave his background in horror films behind him. Nevertheless, in something of a coup, Franco convinced the famous Hammer thespian to reprise his most iconic role as a fanged fiend for 1969's *Count Dracula*.

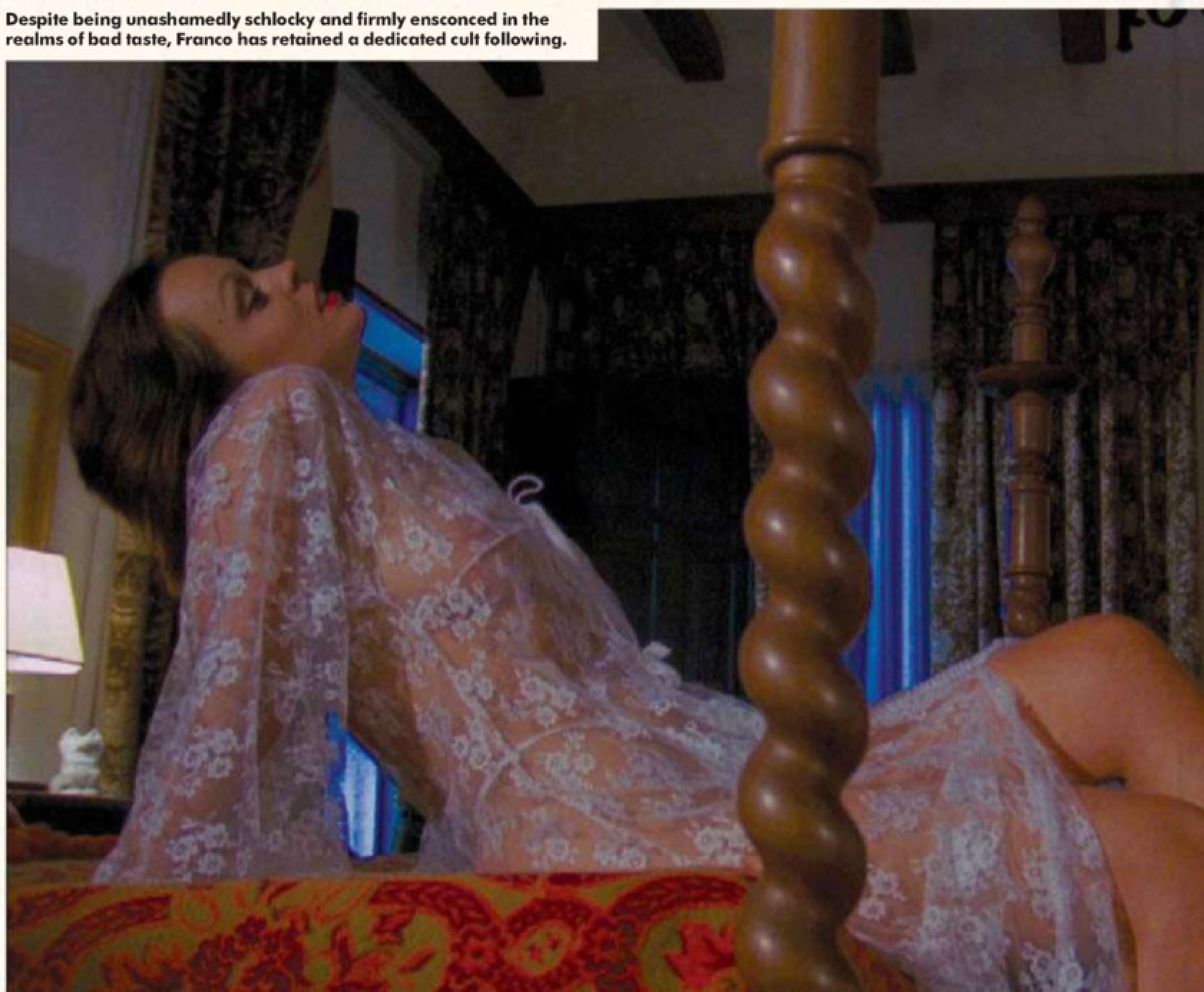
Claiming to be a 'faithful' adaptation of Bram Stoker's book, Franco's adaptation actually pilfers a far more fearsome performance from Lee than his comparatively campy turns as Transylvania's least favourite sanguine-sucking son. Also present are a hysterical Van Helsing (well played by Herbert Lom), a manic Renfield (Klaus Kinski – perfectly cast) and Jonathan Harker's innocent, doe-eyed partner Mina (the lovely Soledad Miranda). Even so, plenty is still lost (and added) in translation, including Dracula stalking Mina in an opera house (!), a ferocious attack by some Alsatian dogs, and a heightened finale in which the Count and some Gypsy loyalists are cornered by a large plastic boulder.

As such, *Count Dracula* is a bit of a mixed bag, but Franco at least uses Tower's production funds to present a visually ambitious project, with some great locations (Italy, Spain and West Germany were used for the shoot) and a generally agreeable atmosphere of turn-of-the-century menace.

"I was once interviewing Christopher Lee, and I asked him why he kept working with Jess," states

"I DON'T THINK HE WAS TRYING TO MAKE BAD MOVIES – I JUST THINK HIS STYLE WAS VERY UNIQUE, AND IT ONLY MAKES MORE SENSE WHEN YOU WATCH MORE AND MORE OF HIS FILMS"
PETER STRICKLAND

Despite being unashamedly schlocky and firmly ensconced in the realms of bad taste, Franco has retained a dedicated cult following.





***Bloody Moon* was characterised as a 'video nasty' in the UK and banned.**







A GUIDE TO SPANISH HORROR

Jess Franco is by no means the whole story...

General Francisco Franco's reign was actually a rich and creative period for Spanish horror. While women were treated as second-class citizens and homosexuality was illegal, a number of filmmakers rebelled against the norm with genre flicks that subverted the accepted 'morals' of the time. Jess Franco may have been chief among these, but also prominent was actor/director Paul Naschy, who is most famous for appearing as the lycanthrope Waldemar Daninsky. Naschy's fur-covered creature first surfaced in 1968's *The Mark Of The Wolf Man*, although UK fans might be more familiar with 1975's *The Werewolf And The Yeti*, which was somehow banned a 'video nasty'.

One of the greatest achievements of this period is 1971's zombie opus *Tombs Of The Blind Dead* from director Amando de Ossorio, the success of which led to three sequels. Almost as impressive was Eloy de la Iglesia's *Cannibal Man* (1973), which dealt with homosexuality in a period of obvious repression, while 1973's *A Bell From Hell* and 1974's Naschy-starring *Blue Eyes Of The Broken Doll* kept Mediterranean malevolence alive. And no list can be complete without 1974's Italian co-production *The Living Dead At The Manchester Morgue* or 1976's *Who Can Kill A Child?*

Pickings from the Eighties and Nineties are sadly slim, but Juan Piquer Simón's trash-tastic *Pieces* (1982), Pedro Almodóvar's arthouse oddity *Matador* (1986), Álex de la Iglesia's *Acción Mutante* (1993) and the disturbing *Tesis* (1996) indicate that the trend was not entirely over. Today, thanks to the success of the *[REC]* franchise and such notables as Stuart Gordon's 2001 creature feature *Dagon*, *The Machinist* (2004), *The Orphanage* (2007) and Jaume Balagueró *Sleep Tight* (2011), Spanish shock is enjoying a renewed boom period. Its original initiators may no longer be with us (Ossorio passed in 2001 and Naschy in 2009), but their legacy has not been for nothing. To this day, the country that once housed a hotbed of rebellious young directors continues to inspire genre fans.



TOP TEN OF JESS

A beginner's guide to Franco's finest in chronological order



1. THE AWFUL DR ORLOFF (1962)

This slickly shot psycho-killer classic is a far more straightforward frightener than many of Franco's later movies. It also heralds the genesis of Spanish scary movies.



2. A VIRGIN AMONG THE LIVING DEAD (1973)

A subdued ghost story with occasionally eerie atmospherics, *A Virgin Among The Living Dead* is one of Franco's most unusual horror epics.



3. COUNT DRACULA (1970)

Christopher Lee completists should hold this Franco adaptation in higher regard. It may be a minority opinion, but the old English thespian outdoes his Hammer performances with this more studied fanged-fling.



4. THE BLOODY JUDGE (1970)

Another solid role for Lee – this time as a woman-hating Witchfinder. Lee's character is based on the real-life Baron George Jeffreys.



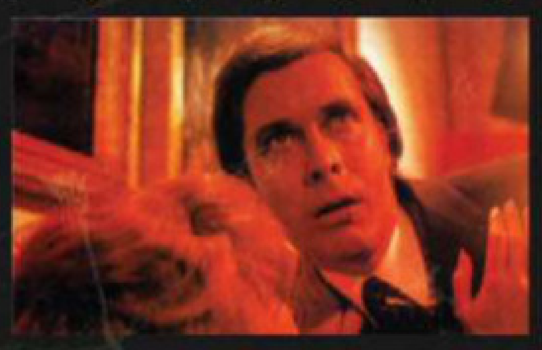
5. SHE KILLED IN ECSTASY (1971)

Franco at his experimental best – a visual feast for the eyes and starring the sultry Soledad Miranda as a weapon-wielding murderess. Brilliant.



6. VAMPYROS LESBOS (1971)

Franco and Miranda working at the height of their powers – unconventional aesthetics, plenty of flesh-flaunting, a feverish jazz-funk soundtrack and, yes, even some vampirism.



7. SUCCUBUS (1967)

Very Sixties – this swinging journey into promiscuous sex, sado-masochism, Satanism and glorious period costumes successfully managed to be both boisterous and beguiling.



8. JACK THE RIPPER (1976)

Gothic ambience abounds in this very loose take on the case of the Whitechapel murders. Klaus Kinski makes for a convincing maniac, and Franco stages some of his best horror moments.



9. BLOODY MOON (1981)

Caught up in the video nasty scandal, *Bloody Moon* is a horribly dubbed riff on *Friday The 13th* That said, unintentional laughs and some energetic gore sequences make this a fast-paced and strangely enjoyable slasher.



10. FACELESS (1988)

This late-in-the-day classic really should have led Franco into a twilight period of top-quality terror titles. Unfortunately, the slice-and-dice delirium of *Faceless* stands as his last defining moment.

Timpone. "He shrugged and said, 'Well, I always just hoped for the best with each new one – and he was a very likeable man.' It is funny, because at the same time as he did *Count Dracula*, Lee acted in a movie for Franco and Towers called *The Bloody Judge* – a riff on *Witchfinder General*. Lee plays this devious Lord who condemns women to death as witches, and he is actually pretty good in it. But Franco would have him do his scenes, and then when Lee would leave the set, the other actors got their cue to take their clothes off and engage in softcore sex acts. And Lee said people were calling him up and saying, 'Hey, what are you doing in this movie with all this sex?' And he would reply, 'What do you mean? I didn't do any of that.' But that was just the way Jess worked."

Such an approach also informed Franco's *99 Women* (1968), a hugely scandalous and successful women-in-prison movie that inspired an entire genre – including the even more notorious Ilsa, *She Wolf Of The SS* (1975). For *99 Women*, Franco and Towers edited together two different versions: a 'soft' cut, heavy on exposed female flesh, lesbianism and various acts of kinky excess, and an 'XXX' version with actual hardcore sex. The end result paid off – *99 Women* was a cause célèbre when it began its run on the American grindhouse circuit, while in France, the sexier version travelled through a number of Parisian adult cinemas. Yet, perhaps feeling a little downtrodden about how controlled and even conventional his work with Towers was, Franco made a return to the more by-the-teeth/ad-libbed approach of *Succubus* with his next series of movies. Having found a new leading lady in the shape of Soledad Miranda (from *Count Dracula*), Franco began to cast a number of low-budget West German co-productions around vague fantasy plots in which the dark-haired vixen would drop her robe a great deal.



"Soledad had a wonderful quality on screen," affirms Taylor. "I only worked with her once, which was on *Count Dracula*, and she was a delightful lady. She had a magic quality – what you might call the 'it' factor. It has to do with all number of things: eyes and presence and how you look on-camera… some actresses just have it, and Soledad was one of them. I apparently 'starred' in a movie called *Nightmares Come At Night* with Soledad, but that was made around footage from other films. Jess was always editing stuff into different movies."

The most famous of the Franco/Miranda movies are also the director's two finest achievements: *She Killed In Ecstasy* (1971) and *Vampyros Lesbos* (1971). In the former, the actress portrays the widow of a doctor whose controversial experiments cause him to commit suicide. Miranda, who engages in an extensive amount of kit-offery, comes alive as an alluring femme castratrice who tracks down the medical professionals that drove her beloved to take his life. With a shaky-cam, travelogue, zoom-heavy approach to capturing the various instances of grotesque plasma-spurting and heightened oestrogen, *She Killed In Ecstasy* is a curious proposal – non-linear, but evocative and almost otherworldly in the way it creates a random sense of sexually threatening frissons. Likewise, the even more threadbare *Vampyros Lesbos* is really just an excuse to show plenty of female coupling, with continental sunshine and interludes for jazz-funk music on the soundtrack. However, the baroque sets and nightmarish sense of sexual awakening make for an enchanting undertaking (a young female lawyer is uncontrollably drawn to Miranda's harlot after she begins to infest her dreams).

"IF JESS FRANCO HAD MORE MONEY TO WORK WITH HE WOULD BE A MORE ACCLAIMED FILMMAKER" TONY TIMPONE



***A Virgin Among The Living Dead* is traditionally rated as one of Franco's better films.**

One of Franco's most famous flicks, *Vampyros Lesbos* also influenced the filmmaker's personal life. He offered Miranda a multi-year contract deal shortly after its box office success, but tragically the actress died in a car accident on the way to the signing, leaving Franco distraught. Many of his subsequent efforts were decidedly lightweight.

Taylor returned to his friend's forte for *The Revenge Of Dr Mabuse* (1971), but the likes of *Dracula Vs Frankenstein* (1972) – a barely competent monster-mash – and *Dracula's Daughter* (1972), which would have benefited from Miranda's presence, are painfully dull efforts. More barrel-scraping came from *The Erotic Rights Of Frankenstein* (1972) – which is far less exciting than its title may indicate – the flesh-flaunting Intimate *Diary Of A Nymphomaniac* (1972), and the belated follow-up *The Sinister Eyes Of Dr Orloff* (1973).

Some solace during this troubled period was offered by producer Robert de Nesle, who gave

HAIL GENERAL

Peter Strickland on paying homage to Franco

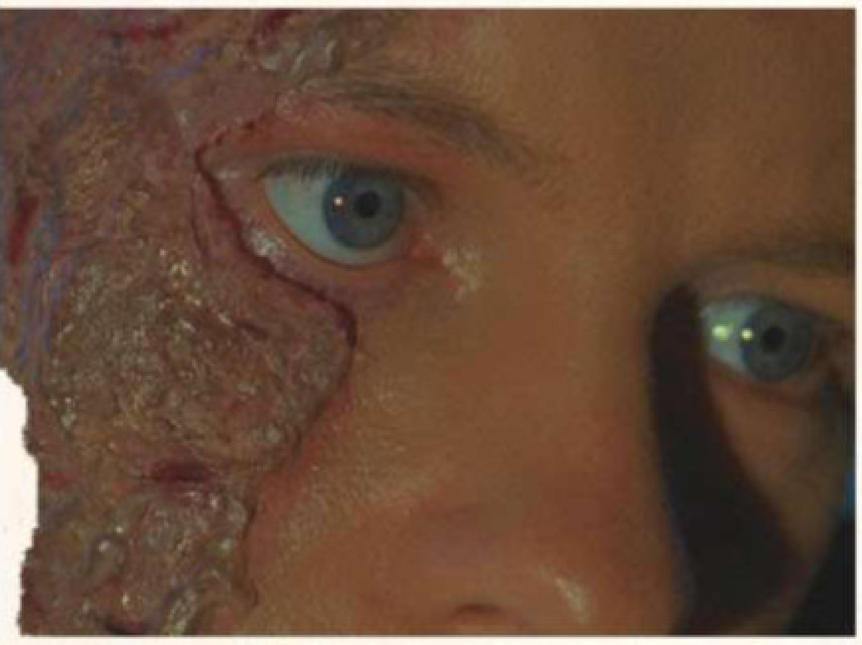
Having paid tribute to the giallo horror of Dario Argento and Mario Bava with 2012's acclaimed *Berberian Sound Studio*, British director Peter Strickland finds himself inspired by another European influence for his upcoming 'dark melodrama' (his words) *The Duke Of Burgundy*.

"I wanted this to feel like a Euro-exploitation film of the Seventies," he begins to SciFiNow. "Jess Franco has been a really big inspiration on the movie. Maybe it is because I only started getting into him just before I decided to make this. I was getting a few dubious second-hand DVDs from shops around Charing Cross Road, and that is how I stumbled across Franco's work. I found it to be a revelation.

"I had heard of *Vampyros Lesbos*, but that was about it – and yet there is this large, incredible, varied and really interesting body of work there. I have been trying to see as much of his stuff as possible – which is difficult considering how much is out there [laughs]. I find Franco to be very strange and mysterious, but also sensual, alluring and at times very, very odd. There is a strange poetry in a good Jess Franco film, and it is the sort of strange poetry which you cannot find in anything else."

COMPLETE GUIDE TO
JESS FRANCO



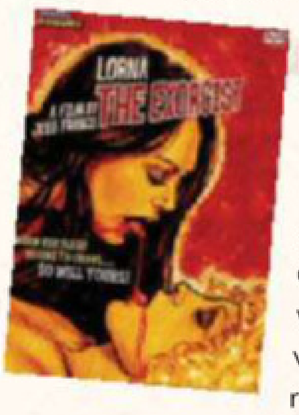


Franco an apparent carte blanche with the decidedly un-commercial *A Virgin Among The Living Dead* (1972). With this esoteric opus, Franco embarked on a surrealist but exposition-heavy haunted house story about a woman from London who ventures into a countryside castle to reunite with her family. The end result, filmed under the title *Christina, Princess Of Eroticism*, is a bizarre mediation on sex, family, friendship and death. Unfortunately, but perhaps understandably, the movie would only gain fame when, in the early Eighties during the boom period of Italy's Lucio Fulci, the French filmmaker Jean Rollin was hired to add some zombie footage to the movie, and *A Virgin Among The Living Dead* became something of a VHS staple.

The best news for Franco, though, came with the discovery of an aspiring 18-year-old actress called Lina Romay. Franco had planned to continue his *Vampyros Lesbos* series of 'sexy' femmes-and-fangs shockers, but after the disappointment of *Dracula's Daughter*, he seemed to accept that Soledad Miranda was irreplaceable. Yet, when Romay – who was married to a photographer at the time – came into his life, Franco found a willing exhibitionist with the same apparent kinks as himself. Consequently, having won the Spanish lottery, the great man sunk his winnings into *Female Vampire* (1973), also known as *Erotikill* and *The Bare Breasted Countess*, and gave Romay a vehicle in which to show her everything.

Co-star Jack Taylor took on the task of taming Romay's irresistible antagonist in *Female Vampire*, and remains surprised that the movie still lives on. "There is a porno version of that movie, you know," he sighs. "Jess never told me he was going insert people having actual sex in that. To me, in whichever version it exists, *Female Vampire* is dreadful. It is really awful. I didn't even like the island that we shot it on."

Even so, the finished film does have its fans. "Yeah, *Female Vampire* is my favourite Franco," enthuses Peter Strickland. "Quite a bit of Franco's work has rubbed off on me, and when I began my new movie, *Duke Of Burgundy*, I actually cast Monica Swim, who was Lina Romay's co-star in *Female Vampire*. So I am a big fan, although I came to Franco's work quite late in the day. I think it has this incredible shambolic quality that is almost impossible to try and copy. I don't think he was trying to make bad movies – I just think his style was very unique, and it only makes more sense when you watch more and more of his films. Plus, you have to remember that in some years he was making seven or eight films – which is almost unthinkable, really."



Now coupled with Romay, Franco would embark on a number of racy sex and sadomasochism movies, including a couple of unutterably strange riffs on *The Exorcist* with *Lorna, The Exorcist* (1974) and the vicious *Demoniac* (1975). However, a new relationship with the Swiss Euro-trash producer Erwin Dietrich brought some new opportunities

Franco's capacity to divide consensus is characterised by the dire likes of *Oasis Of The Zombies*.



"A JOURNALIST TOLD ME TO 'BEWARE OF CAMERA ANGLES THAT VEER UP THE SKIRT,' SO I PUT ON DOUBLE KNICKERS FOR THE FILM"
CAROLINE MUNRO

Love him or hate him, Franco is a loss to the world of low-budget horror.



for commercial genre fare. The partnership began somewhat inauspiciously with 1975's pessimistic women-in-prison pot boiler *Barbed Wire Dolls* (spoiler: everyone dies), which reunited Romay and Monica Swim as cellmates in a political prison (in which everyone is lusting after everyone else). Perhaps surprisingly, the cheapskate *Barbed Wire Dolls* was a hit in American grindhouse cinemas, and became a regular on New York's famous 42nd Street.

As such, Franco and Dietrich would continue to helm similar movies for the remainder of the decade, including *Women Behind Bars* (1975), which ended up on the UK 'video nasty' list, *Women Of Cell Block Nine* (1977) and *Greta, The Mad Butcher* (1977). The latter, a lousy devious-dominatrix flick, was re-titled *Ilsa, The Wicked Warden* for its American bow on account of casting Dyanne 'Ilsa' Thorne as its lead.

"When I saw it, I was very disappointed – and I loved Jess Franco, please don't misunderstand me,'" bemoans Thorne. "But I didn't know that this would just be a sensationalistic film. I thought that Jess, too, was looking to make something that would be of a higher quality, but Dietrich, the producer, apparently already had a reputation for doing films that were a bit low-brow. In fact, I think Greta was a step up for him."

At least one gem snuck out from Franco's period of working with Dietrich: 1976's *Jack The Ripper*, which headlines a surprisingly understated performance from Klaus Kinski. Featuring plenty of period-set mood, this is one of the filmmaker's classiest creepers, and perhaps his most coherent chiller since the Harry Alan Towers era. Unfortunately quite underrated, *Jack The Ripper* indicates that he could still pull out the grisly goods when he felt like it.



Alas, by the end of the decade, he clearly wasn't 'feeling like it' so much. Perhaps it was the fact he no longer faced the challenges of having to deceive the Spanish censors (General Franco passed away in 1975, and the country entered a period of democracy and free speech). Or maybe as a happily married man, he just lacked the passion he once had. Either way, Franco embarked on some pitiful projects – including cashing-in on Italy's infamous cannibal capers with 1979's abysmal *Mondo Cannibale* and 1980's *The Devil Hunter* (another British 'video nasty'). The filmmaker also penned the script to the catastrophic *Cannibal Terror* (1980), another UK 'nasty' for reasons that boggle the mind. The awful *Oasis Of The Zombies* (1981) indicated a clear attempt at blatant commerciality, but few were watching. A similarly obscure fate befell his scriptwriting effort for Jean Rollin, *Zombie Lake* (1981), which Franco opted out of directing at the last minute ("I was going on holiday when the phone rang," laughed Rollin years later).



Franco would return to more familiar territory with the women-in-prison oddity Sadomania (1980), in which the man himself stars as a gay prison guard with a fondness for bestiality(!). Slightly more successful was his *Friday The 13th* rip-off *Bloody Moon* (1981), yet another Franco-flick that found itself banned in the UK during the purge on VHS horror. A series of barely seen dunkers followed, including the bungled and boring jungle adventures *Diamonds Of Kilimanjaro* (1983) and Amazons In *The Temple Of Gold* (1986), before a final return to form with *Faceless* (1988). Surprising just about everyone, this full-colour, Paris-set remake of his original *The Awful Dr Orloff* delivers the gory goods, and remains one of the highlights of late Eighties slasher cinema. Featuring a standout cast that includes Telly Savalas, French glamour girl (and Jean Rollin regular) Brigitte Lahaie, familiar character names Helmut Berger and Christopher Mitchum, as well as ex-Bond girl Caroline Munro, *Faceless* was a far more ambitious undertaking than usual. Coupled with some cracking splatter effects and a suspenseful story about a kidnapped model (Munro), whose mug may or may not be perfect for the disfigured visage of Mitchum's bedroom-ridden wife, Franco could bask in the acclaim of one his finest fright films to date. At the time, *Faceless* did the festival circuit and achieved generally favourable fan and critic feedback.



"I loved working with Jess," enthuses *Faceless* star Munro. "I thought he was a great director. I wasn't aware of his 'sleazy' reputation, but a journalist told me to 'beware of camera angles that veer up the skirt,' and I thought, 'I wonder – what does he mean by that?' So I put on double knickers for the film, because I was only wearing a top for most of my scenes, and yes, in the final movie the camera is trying its best," she laughs.

"But Jess was very proud of *Faceless*, and it had a great cast too. I think the end result was excellent, I really do."

Ultimately, *Faceless* was the final hurrah for Franco. For most directors, such a late-in-the-day achievement may have launched them onto bigger and better things. For Franco, he opted instead to try his hand at war movies (such as 1989's *The Fall Of Eagles*, which reunited him with Christopher Lee and even threw Mark Hamill into the mix) and, as a vanity project, attempted to conclude Orson Welles' famously unfinished *Don Quijote* (1957). By the late Nineties, the director had veered into largely unwatchable made-for-video sludge such as *Killer Barbys* (1996) and *Lust For Frankenstein* (1998), which headlined scream queens Linnea Quigley and Michelle Bauer. By the time of his death, Franco had been shooting his latest monster movies – with titles such as *Revenge Of The Alligator Women* (2013) – as no-budget, digital camcorder car crashes. Inevitably, no one was watching anymore. Prior to the director's death, news began to surface of an Udo Keir-starring remake of *The Awful Dr Orloff* – perhaps Franco's last-ditch attempt at saving a reputation blighted by 15 years of irredeemable inanity.

Of course, it was never to be. "I saw Jess at a film festival in Spain back in 2002, and he was very frail," adds Timpone. "He was a chain smoker and he was coughing a lot. He looked a lot older than he was, and Lina seemed a little bemused by what little fan attention he was getting – and he was not getting much. He showed a shot-on-video thing, and it was laughed off the screen, and I felt bad for him. I sat down and spoke to Jess and Lina one evening, because they were alone together at the bar and no one had really noticed them. We talked a lot about the 'good old days', and you could tell that his era had passed. His stuff only really made a mark when it could play the grindhouse circuit – like in 42nd Street and other inner city areas. But because that had all disappeared, so had Jess Franco."

Still, wheelchair-bound and clutching a Goya Award, Franco was given the recognition that he deserved before he left this planet. Sure, he made more garbage than good, and his taste can be questioned but there are some diamonds among the rough, and for instigating the Spanish horror movement and his never-say-die attitude, it's difficult not to respect him.

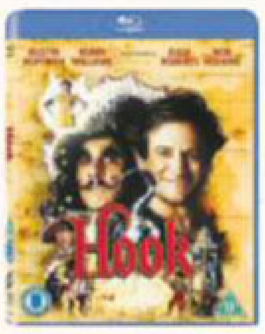
The last words, then, go to one of his most tolerant collaborators. "He was magician and a snake charmer," admits Jack Taylor. "But I owe him a great deal – and cinema as a whole would have been a lot worse off without Jess Franco."

THIS SUMMER, CINEMA LOST A LEGEND IN ROBIN WILLIAMS. HIS SENSE OF FUN AND FLAIR FOR THE FANTASTICAL MADE HIM A PERFECT MATCH FOR PETER PAN IN HOOK, SPIELBERG'S RE-IMAGINING OF JM BARRIE'S CLASSIC STORY. SCIFINOW REMEMBERS WHAT MADE IT MAGICAL…

WORDS **POPPY-JAY PALMER**

HOOK

TimeWarp Retro Classic Film



Film

RUNNING TIME: 144 mins
RELEASE DATE: 11 December 1991
DIRECTOR: Steven Spielberg
WRITERS: James V Hart, Malia Scotch Marmo, Nick Castle
CAST: Robin Williams, Dustin Hoffman, Julia Roberts, Bob Hoskins, Maggie Smith

About

Peter Banning is a cut-throat lawyer who spends too much time with his fax machine and not enough with his family. One night, while visiting his foster mother Wendy in London, his children Jack and Maggie are kidnapped by Captain James Hook. Just when all hope seems lost, Peter is paid a visit by a fairy called Tinkerbell. She tries to convince him that he was once a hero, and takes him to Neverland to save his kids. Before he has a chance of bringing Jack and Maggie home, however, Tinkerbell and the Lost Boys must help Peter jog his memory so he can fight, fly and crow, and remember how to live.

Everyone knows the story: a flying boy and a fairy appear in a nursery one starry night and take three children with them to Neverland, following the second star to the right and straight on 'til morning. There, they meet mermaids and fight pirates, never wanting to grow up.

Hook is the same story in reverse. Peter (Robin Williams) is an adult who doesn't want to be a kid. But everyone knows that story too. It's a scientific fact that 99 per cent of the world's movie-watching population has seen *Hook* at least six times. You can look it up.

Peter Banning is a lawyer. He's not selfish or power-hungry; he's just not that great a bloke. As far as his wife and kids are concerned, breaking promises is the norm for him. He makes phone calls through his daughter Maggie (Amber Scott)'s school plays and misses his son Jack (Charlie Korsmo)'s baseball games altogether.

While family tensions are high, the Bannings fly to London to visit Peter's old foster mother, Granny Wendy (Maggie Smith). The plane journey doesn't go well; Jack is still mad at his dad for bailing at his baseball game, and Peter is scared of heights. We all solemnly bow our heads at the irony, not to mention the problems that are bound to ensue.

Once in London, Peter and his wife pop on their glad rags and take Granny Wendy out for a charity dinner held in her honour. They leave the kids home with the maid and Tootles (Arthur Malet), an old man with flyaway hair who has lost his marbles in every sense of the phrase.

Returning home, the three stumble up the front steps of the house. But something isn't quite right; the front door has been smashed, and something has scratched



The Lost Boys taught Peter what it was to live again.

"HAVE TO SAVE MAGGIE, HAVE TO SAVE JACK. HOOK IS BACK"

the wall all the way up the staircase. The film score has turned serious and sinister.

"The children…" whispers Wendy, and they thunder up the stairs.

The beds in the nursery are empty, and the window is wide open. Someone has left a note on parchment paper pinned to the door with a sword: 'Dear Peter – Your presence is required at the request of your children. Kindest personal regards, Hook.'

Tootles eerily appears in the doorway and walks slowly towards Peter.

"Have to fight. Have to fly. Have to crow. Have to save Maggie, have to save Jack. Hook is back."

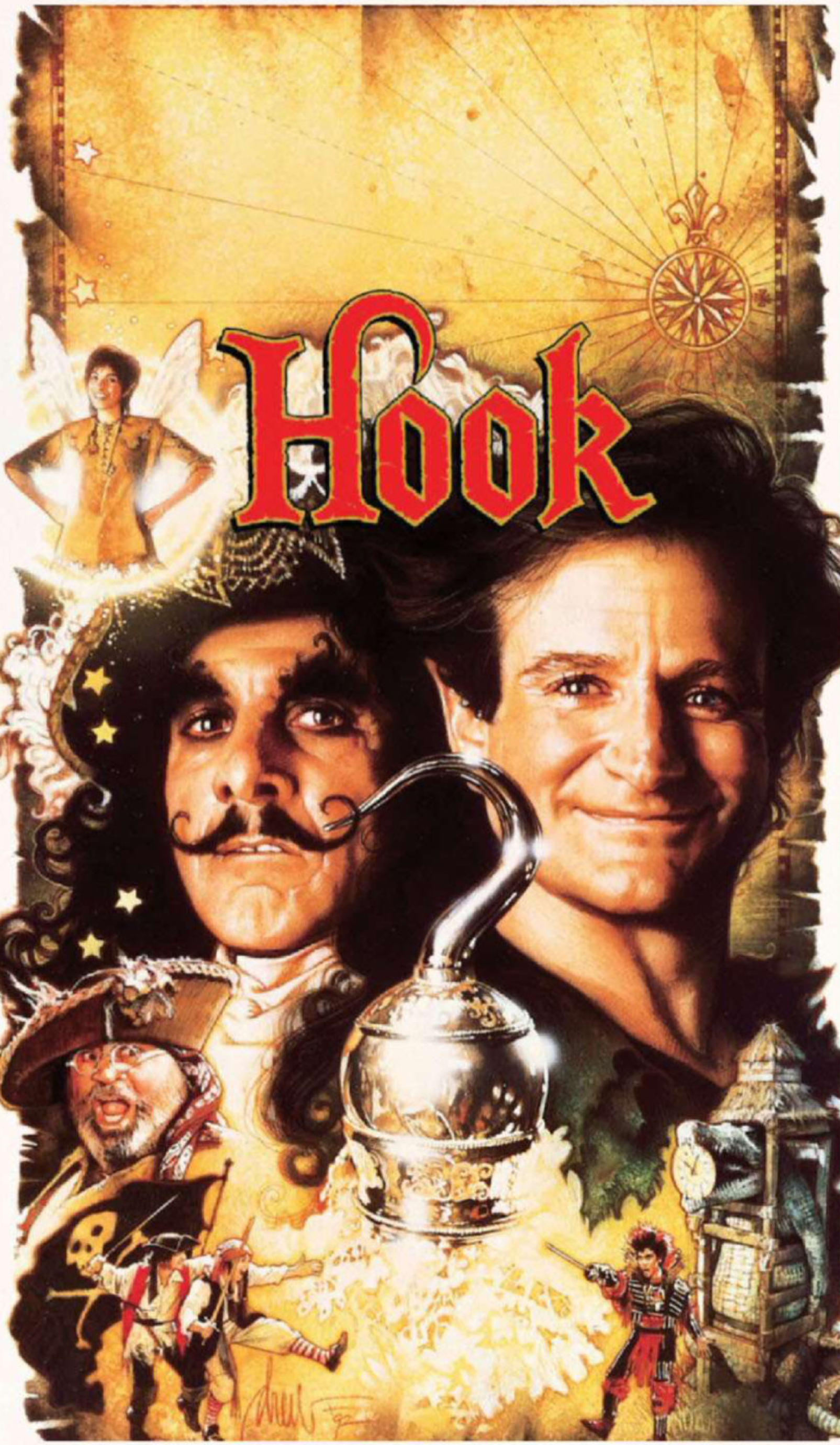
"Who?" asks Peter. Wendy faints.

The search for the children is futile; there are no leads to go on. Later that night, when Peter is alone and still dressed in half his tux, he is paid a visit by a fairy called Tinkerbell, in the form of Academy Award-winning actress Julia Roberts.



Peter reckons he must be on drugs, and tries to kill her. Tinkerbell tells him he is actually Peter Pan, and that they used to be friends. She kidnaps him and takes him back to Neverland, where he belongs.

Once there, the two drop in on the pirate town, and are confronted by the one and only Captain James Hook, played by a hairier-than-life Dustin Hoffman, and his second in command, Smee (an equally hairy Bob Hoskins). Jack and Maggie are in a net hanging from the rigging of Hook's ship.



CLASSIC QUOTES

"FIREFLY FROM HELL! BIG DAMN BUG!"
PETER

"HE'LL CROW. HE'LL FIGHT. HE'LL FLY. AND THEN... HE'LL DIE"
HOOK

"IF I'M A MAGGOT BURGER, WHY DON'T YOU JUST EAT ME?! YOU TWO-TONED, ZEBRA-HEADED, SLIME-COATED, PIMPLE-FARMING, PARAMECIUM BRAIN, MUNCHING-ON-YOUR-OWN-MUCUS, SUFFERING FROM PETER PAN ENVY!"
PETER

"IT IS TRUE. YOU DID GROW UP. I DRANK POISON FOR YOU. YOU USED TO CALL ME 'TINK'. HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN EVERYTHING?"
TINKERBELL

"I'LL TELL YOU WHAT A PARAMECIUM IS. THAT'S A PARAMECIUM! IT'S A ONE-CELLED CRITTER WITH NO BRAIN THAT CAN'T FLY! DON'T MESS WITH ME, MAN! I'M A LAWYER!"
PETER

"YOU ARE THE PAN"
RUFIO

"EVERY TIME SOMEONE SAYS 'I DON'T BELIEVE IN FAIRIES', SOMEWHERE THERE'S A FAIRY THAT FALLS DOWN DEAD"
TINKERBELL

"I'VE JUST HAD AN APOSTROPHE"
HOOK

"TO DIE WILL BE A GREAT ADVENTURE"
PETER

"KILL THE LAWYER!"
THE LOST BOYS

"PETER PAN'S MY... DAD?"
MAGGIE

RETRO CLASSIC
HOOK

When he left Neverland, Peter was a kid. He could fly, fight and crow, and was Hook's great and worthy opponent. But now, he can't fly, he can't fight and he can't crow. Sure, he has a mortgage and a law degree, but he's forgotten who he is. He can't even climb the rigging and touch his children's outstretched fingers because of the whole vertigo thing. Not convinced that his great and worthy opponent is actually that worthy or great, Hook agrees to give Peter three days to get himself back into flying, fighting, crowing shape for a war between the pirates and the Lost Boys.

Unfortunately, the Lost Boys aren't convinced either. But Tinkerbell remains adamant, and convinces them to help her prepare Peter for the war anyway. But before things can go any further, in swoops Rufio (Dante Basco), leader of the Lost Boys and unofficial king of the dickwads. He's completely, definitely not convinced that Peter is the real Peter Pan.

After an intense training montage, they all settle down for dinner, and Peter is shocked to find that the food is imaginary. The Lost Boys tuck right in around him, but Peter looks on, somewhat hungry and confused. He's been away from Neverland for so many years that he can't play along.

Rufio is not impressed. "Eat your heart out, you wrinkled, crinkled fat-bag," he says. The Lost Boys go wild.

Peter is appalled. "You're a very ill-mannered young man, you know that?"

The preceding conversation results in the best shade-throwing scene in movie history.

"Math tutor," zings Peter.

"Pinhead," Rufio hits back.

"Prison barber."

"Mother lover."

"Near-sighted gynecologist."

"Lying, crying, spying, prying ultra-pig!"

"You lewd, crude, rude, bag of pre-chewed food dude!"

The burns are coming thick and fast, but Rufio soon breaks under the pressure.

"You… you man! You stupid, stupid man!"

Now the Lost Boys are cheering on Peter. Lost in the moment, Peter scoops a

"IT RESULTS IN THE BEST SHADE-THROWING SCENE IN HISTORY"



Hoffman's wig and eyebrows became nearly as iconic as the film itself.



Dustin Hoffman's Hook faces up to Peter Banning – not Pan.



Julie Roberts as the red-haired, pixie-cut Tinkerhell – er, bell.

IT'S ALL HIGH BROW

Five of the most noteworthy eyebrows in sci-fi

SPOCK
STAR TREK



1 An obvious one,but look at that face. With those cheekbones and that intellect, his whole head is sharp enough to cut cheese. Nimoy's shaped brows are perhaps the most iconic in history.

RYGEL XVI
FARSCAPE



2 Rygel's eyebrows are so far off the hook that they are barely on his face. A strong, sophisticated look for Hynerians everywhere. Fashion statement or simply an outrageously brilliant gene pool? You decide.

SYLAR
HEROES



3 Zachary Quinto hit the jackpot in the gene pool, as Sylar's fantastic eyebrows in *Heroes* also happen to be his own. He subsequently lent them to Spock for *Star Trek*.

spoonful of nothing from the bowl in front of him and flicks it in Rufio's face. And there's food all over his nose.



Suddenly, there's food everywhere: steaming turkey legs, vegetables and desserts in every colour fill the pots and pans. Peter is finally using his imagination.

The food fight that follows sparks Peter's transition from lawyer Peter Banning to flying, fighting, crowing Peter Pan. His ears grow pointy, his hair gets more windswept and he swaps his tux for tights and a sword. He regains his memories from when he was in Neverland, and becomes the Pan he was always meant to be.

Finally war-ready, Peter, Tinkerbell and the Lost Boys return to Captain Hook's ship. While they were away, Hook had been brainwashing Jack and Maggie into loving him more than their own dad. Maggie managed to stay strong, but Jack, the little traitor, smashed a pocket watch Peter gave him and got himself decked out to look just like Hook.

More determined than ever to win his children back, Peter swoops in, saves Maggie and joins Rufio (who is now his close friend) in a sword-fight with Hook, which results in Rufio being stabbed. Peter cradles him and, with his last breath, Rufio says he wishes he had a dad like Peter.

Jack realises what a massive tit he's been, and asks his dad to take him and Maggie home. As if on cue, a giant stuffed crocodile falls on Hook and kills him. A bittersweet celebration follows, and Peter is finally free leave with his children.

On returning home, Peter is a changed man. He finally realises the value of his family and having a youthful heart.

Opinions about *Hook* are usually mixed. Some think it is bangarang, and refuse to budge even when confronted with criticism about that one scene where Tinkerbell gets massive and confesses her love for Peter in a spangly ball gown. Others think it sucked, and always bring up that one scene just to annoy the bangarang group.

Production for the film was a disaster. The 76-day shooting schedule went to 116 days and the budget went from $48 million to $80 million due to shooting taking so long. Roberts was reportedly nicknamed 'Tinkerhell' because she was so difficult to work, with and the Lost Boys put Spielberg off wanting any more kids.

All that aside, *Hook* still managed to be the fourth highest-grossing film of 1991, beating *The Silence Of The Lambs* and *The Addams Family* in the top ten. It wasn't a big award winner – Roberts lost out on the Golden Raspberry Award to Sean Young as the dead twin in *A Kiss Before Dying* – but TriStar Pictures made a tidy little profit of $50 million, and we got to see Robin Williams in tights.

Though it had an all-star cast, *Hook* was really Williams' film. It was splattered with references to his earlier work, like *Good Morning Vietnam* ("Good morning, Neverland!"), *Dead Poets' Society* and *Seize The Day*. His casting in it was also flawless. The late actor radiated warmth and youthful energy, so the story of Peter Pan, the boy who never grew up, was a perfect fit for him.





Hook is available to buy now on Blu-ray and DVD.



Peter (Robin Williams) reflects on what his life has become.

WATCH FIRST



PETER PAN (1924)

This black-and-white silent adventure film was the first screen adaptation of the play by JM Barrie.

WATCH NEXT



FINDING NEVERLAND (2004)

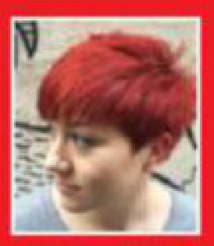
Johnny Depp stars as JM Barrie as he strikes up a friendship with the family who inspired Peter Pan.

YOUR TAKE ON THE CLASSIC

WHAT YOU THOUGHT @SCIFINOW



"BANGARAAAAAAAANG!" **@TanjaWho**



"One of my favourite childhood movies. What an adventure!" **@wildfire198**



"MY CHILDHOOD! A re-imagining of Peter Pan made magical by Williams, Hoffman, Hoskins – and RU-FI-O!" **@Steppenfreak**



"One of my favourite movies growing up, and I still love it now." **@bubbley_beez**



"The kids didn't seem to enjoy it much but the grown ups had fun, didn't they?" **@TheCrowLady**

POISON IVY
BATMAN & ROBIN



4 Technically, those aren't her real eyebrows, but we are willing to overlook that fact due to how fabulously Poison Ivy rocks the style. And let's face it, everything about her is simply fabulous.

THE 12TH DOCTOR
DOCTOR WHO



5 Most Iconic 'brows of the Year goes to Peter Capaldi for their starring role in 'The Day Of The Doctor' last November. They have since continued to be a topic of the latest episodes of *Doctor Who*.

INTERVIEW
RICHARD KIEL

"JAVIER BARDEM SAID HIS FAVOURITE BOND FILM WAS MOONRAKER NOT BECAUSE OF ROGER MOORE, BUT BECAUSE OF JAWS – I LOVE JAWS'"
RICHARD KIEL



© Rex

INTERVIEW

RICHARD KIEL REMEMBERED

FROM NEARLY PLAYING THE INCREDIBLE HULK TO BRINGING TEETH TO BOND VILLAINY, RICHARD KIEL WAS AN UNFORGETTABLE PRESENCE. BEFORE HIS UNTIMELY DEATH, THE MAN BEHIND JAWS SPOKE TO SCIFINOW...

WORDS **OLIVER PFEIFFER**

Thanks to his colossal height, steel-toothed grin and seeming invincibility, Jaws remains one of the most feared James Bond villains of all time. However, in the flesh, the actor who portrayed him, Richard Kiel, was a delightfully friendly giant who enjoyed nothing better than waxing lyrical about the good old days of playing a character who could literally tear the life out of Ford transit vans and killer sharks, making his untimely death on 10 September 2014 all the more tragic. We caught up with the seven-foot-two actor at Sydney's Supanova Pop Culture Expo, where he revealed why he was grateful that Lou Ferrigno took over from him as the Incredible Hulk and how he wasn't afraid to confront producers over his unique preference for his own Bond girl.

One of your earliest roles was as the ambiguous, Earth-visiting alien Kanamit in the classic 1962 *Twilight Zone* television episode 'To Serve Man'. Tell us about landing the part.
I was filming this caveman fantasy film called *Eegah* when I got the call to be on *The Twilight Zone*. I was able to get away for a week, and it turned out to be one of the top five classic *Twilight Zone* episodes. What a twist to that episode! It still sends shivers down the spine.

You originally landed the role of the Incredible Hulk too, but experienced some difficulties. Can you tell us about that?
From birth I've only been able to see out of my left eye, and therefore that eye is sensitive to anything stuck in there. I got black and blue eyes from putting those contact lenses in, and the fluid they used collected in the cornea, so I was seeing rainbows all the time. It really affected my vision, and I couldn't drive at night either.

The green make-up was a real pain too: I had a '75 Caprice classic convertible with a white interior, and it turned green. Then my bathtub turned green, and my bed sheets became green as well, so I was having a miserable time with it!

How did you ultimately leave the series?
I was contracted not for the TV series, but for two movies of the week, which served as a pilot. I knew that everyone wanted to go with a series, and I really wasn't hoping for that. Then I received a call from the producer, who said, "Richard, I hired you as you're a good actor, but frankly the Marvel Comics people would really like to have a bodybuilder in the role. How would you feel if we were to pay you for these movies and you didn't have to do them?" So that was great. I told him I was disappointed, of course [laughs]. But I think Lou Ferrigno was marvelous as the Hulk, and it was perfect for him.

Your most famous role is, of course, Jaws in *The Spy Who Loved Me* and *Moonraker*. What was the most difficult aspect of bringing that character to life?
Making the character more human and interesting. He turned out to be kind of likeable, and I didn't expect that, but I always wanted to make him well rounded. To me, real villains are like real life; they have a mother, they have a girlfriend; they are real people. So I approached Jaws as a guy who was just doing his job.

What was it like tearing that van apart in *The Spy Who Loved Me*?
It was kind of like tearing a Coors beer can. It had seams that came apart – you just grab it in the right place and pull real hard. It was a lot of fun!

And the Jaws-attacking-Jaws scene during the climax – taking a bite out of that shark!
Well, we did two endings: an ending where I die and an ending where I live. I didn't know which one they were going to use until I saw it at a screening at MGM Studios with a regular audience. When we got to the part where Jaws swims away, the audience loved it! I was shocked – I didn't expect that!

By popular demand, you reprised the role for *Moonraker*. I believe it was the director's grandson who was instrumental in Jaws having a change of heart toward the climax...
He said, "Grandpa, I like Jaws! Why does he have to be a bad guy?"

Was it nice to get your own Bond girl?
In the original script I had a six-foot-tall blonde type, which was terrific. However, when I got to the studio they sprung this big surprise on me. They said, "We have this seven-foot-seven woman," and I said 'What?' How's this going to work? Jaws turns into a good guy, saves the woman, and she wears glasses, and neither one of us fits into [Bond villain] Drax's perfect society, but a seven-foot seven woman doesn't need help from anyone! I said, "How about a short girl about five-foot tall?" They were appalled, and didn't think it would work, so I said, "Well, I'm married to a woman who is less than five-foot-one, and we have two children and another on the way, so obviously it works!" [laughs].

Would you like to play the role again?
I think Jaws has done his thing. But I like the villain in *Skyfall* played by Javier Bardem, and I loved Javier in *No Country for Old Men* and thought he was really scary. In *Skyfall* he made that villain multi-dimensional so that you almost feel sorry for him. Javier said that his first Bond film was *Moonraker,* and that it was his favourite. When asked why, he said "Not because of Roger Moore, but because of Jaws – I love Jaws."



Moonraker is available now on DVD and Blu-ray.



JOHN CARPENTER'S

THE FOG

JOHN CARPENTER, who startled the world with "Halloween,"
now brings you the ultimate experience in terror.

JOHN CARPENTER'S "THE FOG" A DEBRA HILL PRODUCTION
Starring ADRIENNE BARBEAU, JAMIE LEE CURTIS, JOHN HOUSEMAN and JANET LEIGH as Kathy Williams
and starring HAL HOLBROOK as Father Malone
Produced by DEBRA HILL Written by JOHN CARPENTER and DEBRA HILL Directed by JOHN CARPENTER
Executive Producer CHARLES B. BLOCH an ENTERTAINMENT DISCOVERIES, INC. PRESENTATION

FLASHBACK

THE FOG

A DEEPLY HAUNTING GHOST STORY THAT PUTS ITS LIFELESS 2005 REMAKE TO SHAME, JOHN CARPENTER'S ORIGINAL 1980 CHILLER THE FOG IS A TEXTBOOK EXAMPLE OF HOW TO MASTER HEART-PUMPING THRILLS ON A LOW BUDGET. CARPENTER, TOGETHER WITH COLLABORATOR TOMMY LEE WALLACE, REVEALS ALL ABOUT THE MAKING OF THE UNDERRATED INDEPENDENT MASTERPIECE...

WORDS **OLIVER PFEIFFER**

***The Fog* literally started at Stonehenge. In 1977, director John Carpenter was travelling in England with his *Halloween* producer Debra Hill and visiting the prehistoric monument when he caught sight of a seemingly pulsating fog bank sitting on the horizon. Instantly inspired by the ominous vista, the filmmaker contemplated the cinematic possibilities, then turned to his writing/producing partner and said, "What if there was something in that fog – wouldn't that be scary?"**

Following the enormous success of *Halloween*, Carpenter was under enormous pressure to deliver a follow-up film that was equally frightening. However, another slasher film wasn't on the agenda. "We wanted to make an old-fashioned ghost story," explains the writer/director. "It seemed like a good idea at the time, and *The Fog* was different than *Halloween* in many ways, with a bigger cast and a little more scope. Michael Myers is a supernatural-type character, but *Halloween* is pretty straightforward. *The Fog*, however is literally a supernatural movie involving ghosts."



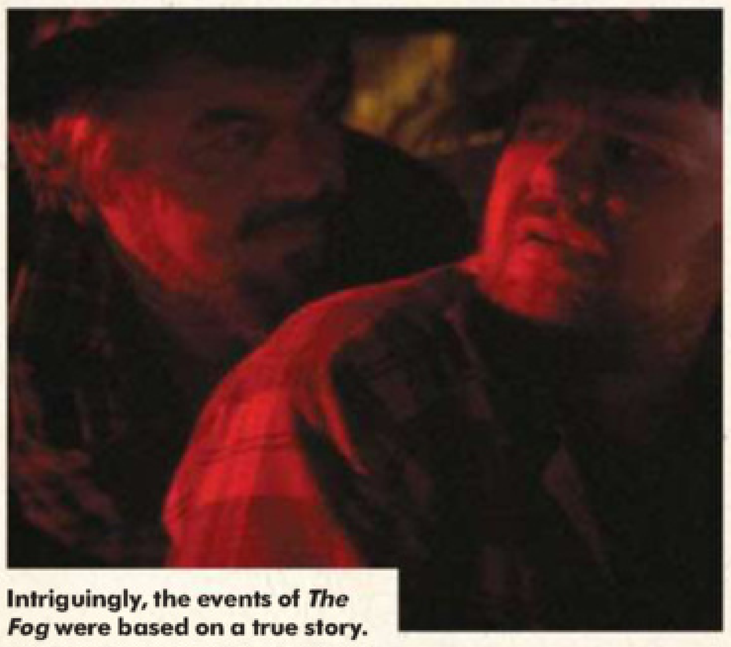
Remarkably, the back story to the main plot, concerning a mysterious glowing fog that engulfs a sleepy coastal Californian town upon its centenary and then emits a band of ghosts seeking retribution for their wrongful deaths, was inspired by a true story. "It came from a real incident back in the 19th Century that occurred in Goleta, California," Carpenter continues. "It was literally the same plot: there were ships coming in, they put out this false fire, the ships crashed, and they looted them, stealing their gold." In the film, it is revealed early on that the six founding fathers of the town plotted to murder the colonists in order to prevent a leper colony from being established nearby. "I thought, 'What a great revenge story,' so this was the back story for why this particular town is cursed."

The fictional town in question is Antonio Bay, home to velvety-voiced Stevie Wayne (Adrienne Barbeau), a disc jockey who operates her radio station from an isolated lighthouse. The picturesque Point Reyes Peninsula in Inverness, Northern California – the second foggiest point in the US – was chosen as the location due to its idiosyncratic setting. "There were plenty of lighthouses in the area, but we wanted something a bit different," reveals Carpenter. "We went on a scout trip, saw this beautiful area, and came upon the Point Reyes lighthouse, which is just astonishing."

Another significant Californian location to be utilised was Bodega Bay, made famous as the central setting for Alfred Hitchcock's horror classic *The Birds*.

This wouldn't be the only unique connection *The Fog* had with the master of suspense, however. Original *Psycho* star Janet Leigh was soon cast as Antonio Bay's centennial celebrations organiser, Kathy Williams. "She was wonderful. An old-time, studio-trained actress – very professional," recalls Carpenter. The director also cast his former *Halloween* star (and Leigh's real-life daughter) Jamie Lee Curtis in a supporting role as a hitchhiking outsider whose arrival – in another interesting nod to *The Birds* – coincides with the attacks at Antonio Bay.

"LOVECRAFT ALWAYS TALKS ABOUT SOMETHING FROM BEYOND TAKING BACK CONTROL AND WAITING TO REVISIT IN SOME WAY" JOHN CARPENTER



Intriguingly, the events of *The Fog* were based on a true story.



Ghost pirates were the villains of choice this time round.

FLASHBACK
THE FOG

Adding to the strong female line-up was Curtis's *Halloween* co-star Nancy Loomis as Leigh's mouthy assistant and Carpenter's then-wife Barbeau in the lead as self-dependent heroine Stevie. Of the male cast, Tom Atkins made his first of several Carpenter film appearances as a local who picks up Curtis' hitchhiker, while seasoned character actor Hal Holbrook plays a drunken pastor who is the grandson of one of the murderous conspirators that originally founded Antonio Bay. Other characters (including Dan O'Bannon, Tommy Wallace and Nick Castle) were cunningly named after real-life Carpenter contemporaries, and the director reassembled many of his *Halloween* collaborators too, including cinematographer Dean Cundey, writer-producer Hill and editor/production designer Tommy Lee Wallace.



A self-confessed sci-fi and horror aficionado, Carpenter was inspired by EC Comics' *Tales From The Crypt* and *Vault Of Horror* and the work of HP Lovecraft. "He always talks about something from beyond taking back control and waiting to revisit in some way," observes the director. Particularly inspirational to *The Fog* was the 1958 British sci-fi film *The Crawling Eye* (aka *The Trollenberg Terror*), concerning monsters hiding in a radioactive cloud that are linked to a series of decapitations at a Swiss mountain resort. In addition, other Fifties favourites *The Tingler* and *X: The Unknown* would motivate key scenes, while the film's 'look for the fog' cautionary closing was a tribute to Howard Hawks' 'watch the skies' conclusion to *The Thing From Another World*. Carpenter would, of course, end up reinterpreting that entire film for his innovative 1982 remake, *The Thing*.

Like *Halloween*, which used confined interior sets to enhance the intensity of the approaching knife-wielding threat, Carpenter utilised the power of claustrophobic spaces for moments of intense character peril, something the filmmaker hints could stem from his own subconscious fears. "I think maybe I've done movies with claustrophobia because I felt that way when I was young. I felt trapped by certain things," he considers. Claustrophobia is particularly effective during the nerve-wracking climatic struggle, where the supernatural forces invade both Stevie's lighthouse and a group of locals hauled up in the town's church.

To achieve the eerily all-encompassing glowing fog effects, dry ice was blown over cleverly constructed miniature sets, while fog machines were used occasionally for exterior locations, which sometimes proved problematic during windy conditions. Other moments showcasing the fog seemingly dispersing were accomplished by skillfully reversing shots.

However, following a 30-day shoot and despite everyone's best efforts, Carpenter would ultimately end up dissatisfied with his original cut for *The Fog*. "We finished the movie, I looked at it, and I didn't think it was very good," he admits candidly. "It just wasn't very scary." As a result, a mere month before its theatrical release the director decided it was back to the drawing board.

"What John was proposing was a major infusion of new stuff to juice up what we already had," remembers Tommy Lee Wallace, who once again served as editor and production designer on *The Fog*. "It was a courageous decision. It meant that he and Debra Hill would have to go hat in hand to the studio and ask for money to shoot additional footage. It amounted to a month-long blitz of additional shooting, editing, sound work and a new musical score."

Carpenter regulars Tom Atkins and Jamie Lee Curtis both starred.



To give *The Fog* extra dramatic panache, a new pre-title storytelling opening was shot in which a salty old sailor (renowned Orson Welles producer John Houseman) retold the town's spooky urban legend to a group of kids round a campfire. Also to significantly heighten the mood, an atmospheric credit sequence was included where various poltergeist-type occurrences take place in Antonio Bay.

But probably the most instrumental decision was to make visible the ghost antagonists that were previously kept shrouded in the fog. Consequently, various close-ups of the actual attacks were shot, including a gut-wrenching confrontation on a boat where several pirates mutilate local sailors with swords and meat hooks.

"The time I spent in front of the camera was in single shots to punch-up scenes, and as a hand actor busting through stained glass and grabbing Jamie Lee Curtis!" reveals Wallace, whose multi-faceted role on the production now included helping to bring literal life to the vengeful ghosts in smoking silhouette. "One of my fondest memories happened shooting these additional scenes and pick-ups with a skeleton crew. It got late. Finally, it was just John and me: him behind the camera, and me in ghost drag, foofing the fog and looming into various scary close-ups."

Future Oscar-winning FX maestro Rob Bottin (who would create the unforgettable shape-shifting creature

Some of the scenes were shot with a skeleton crew, with Carpenter himself on the camera.



"IT WAS JUST JOHN CARPENTER BEHIND THE CAMERA AND ME IN GHOST DRAG, FOOFING THE FOG"

TOMMY LEE WALLACE





Like many of his films, much of *The Fog* takes place in darkness.

effects for Carpenter's *The Thing*) also portrayed lead pirate Blake, and would be responsible for the skin-crawling close-up of a pirate pegged 'worm face'.

Carpenter has said that sound is one of the crucial tools you have on a low-budget production, and on *The Fog* it played a significant part in stimulating certain scenes. Besides the unnerving sounds of shadowy figures knocking on doors in the middle of the night, sound is perhaps most sneakily used in the scene where a ship's locker unexpectedly bursts open, followed a beat later by a corpse leaping out and caressing a startled Curtis – a first-rate example of a low-budget trick used to (double) jolt-inducing effect.



Despite a mixed reception, *The Fog* became a cult hit.



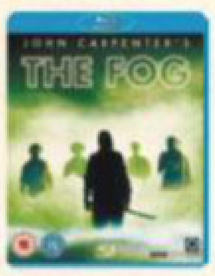
Equally memorable is the unsettling sequence in which the same corpse starts twitching behind Curtis in a morgue, then eerily comes back to life and walks toward her, wielding a knife in a brilliantly timed omniscient sequence that Carpenter attributes to William Castle's 1959 chiller *The Tingler*. The director considers Stevie's seemingly hopeless nail-biting climatic struggle on the roof of the lighthouse to be his Mount Rushmore moment from Hitchcock's *North By Northwest*.

Arguably the most effective component, however, was the director's musical score. Having already composed the instantly iconic haunting theme to *Halloween*, Carpenter achieved another minimalist masterstroke with the chilling piano leitmotif to *The Fog*. "In this case, it was just trying to support the scenes and what's there," says Carpenter modestly. "I was very influenced by Bernard Herrmann, and that's the way I approached it."

Interestingly, this was the second score the director composed for the film. "The original score was pretty damn good too," considers Wallace. "But I think John wanted new music to support his new vision and wash away the bad taste that original cut left in his mouth."

Released in the US on 8 February 1980 to a mixed critical reception, *The Fog* nevertheless became another commercial success story, and Carpenter subsequently considered it "a minor horror classic". Utilising confined sets, superbly realised production design, taunt editing and a brooding score to expertly build a palpable feeling of dread and carefully orchestrated suspense, *The Fog* is arguably as atmospheric and chilling as Carpenter's *Halloween*, and certainly a worthy companion piece to that celebrated classic. Nearly 35 years since its original release, it continues to cement Carpenter's reputation as the ultimate low-budget master craftsman.

"Ghost stories are hard to do, but I'm proud of it and happy with the way it turned out," reflects the director. "It had a great cast, a great look to it, and with the means we had to make the film, I think we came through."



The Fog: Special Edition is out now on DVD and Blu-ray.

FOUR UNDERRATED CARPENTER CUTS

Halloween, Assault On Precinct 13 and *The Thing* all have their rightful place as Carpenter classics, but these four deserve a second chance...

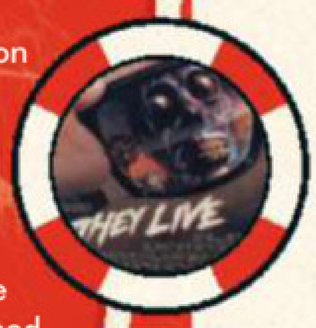
SOMEONE'S WATCHING ME! (1978)
Before *Halloween*, Carpenter helmed this incredibly tense and voyeuristic made-for-TV gem, influenced by Alfred Hitchcock's *Rear Window* and set in a high-rise apartment, is about a reporter (former model Lauren Hutton) who is being tormented by an unseen neighbour. Carpenter's future wife Adrienne Barbeau co-stars, making her first of several appearances for the filmmaker.



PRINCE OF DARKNESS (1987)
A worthy companion piece to *Assault On Precinct 13*, this under-siege sci-fi horror pits a band of research students (and Carpenter veteran Donald Pleasence) against the diabolical forces of the Antichrist in an abandoned church. Blending gruesome Dario Argento-esque kills with Romero-style undead, this represents Carpenter at his uninhibited best.



THEY LIVE (1988)
This subversive satirical science fiction thriller ingeniously insinuates that governing authorities are aliens in disguise who use subliminal messages in advertising to manipulate the masses into spending money. It was a box-office disappointment, but quickly developed a cult following, and its hilariously elongated back-alley fight sequence is a guilty pleasure in itself.



IN THE MOUTH OF MADNESS (1994)
Though it gets pretty convoluted, this HP Lovecraft-inspired meta-horror mystery about an insurance investigator (Sam Neill) looking into the disappearance of a horror author whose books have turned its readers into both homicidal and suicidal maniacs is certainly worth the journey. Chillingly nightmarish imagery and powerhouse performances from a veteran cast turn this scary mid-Nineties return-to-form into a deeply disturbing endeavour into the power of the written word.



THE SCIFINOW HEROES QUIZ

COULD YOU SAVE THE CHEERLEADER? COULD YOU SAVE THE WORLD? TEST YOUR ABILITIES AND SEE IF YOU WOULD HAVE MADE IT ALL THE WAY TO THE DISAPPOINTING FINALE

SAVE THE WORLD

1. What was Sylar's initial ability before he started taking other people's?
2. What is the name of Isaac Mendez's deceased girlfriend and art dealer?
3. Where does Claire Bennet attend university?
4. What event inspired Dr Mohinder Suresh to start researching evolved humans?
5. What is Sylar's real name?

WE CAN BE HIROS

6. Which iconic sci-fi actor plays Hiro's father, businessman Kaito Nakamura?
7. What is the title of Isaac Mendez's comic that depicts Hiro using his abilities for good?
8. What is Hiro's job when he first discovers the nature of his abilities?
9. Which Japanese warrior owned Hiro's sword in the past?
10. What is Ando's screen name on Niki's website?

WE ARE FAMILY

11. Jessica is Niki's alter ego, but who was Jessica before she manifested as Niki's 'superpower'?
12. What breed of dog is Mr Muggles?
13. Who is also known as the Man in the Horn-Rimmed Glasses (aka HRG)?
14. What was the Petrelli's father's ability?
15. After Hiro changed the past in Season Four, who did Ando end up being engaged to?

POWER TO THE PEOPLE

16. Christopher Eccleston plays Claude Rains in Season One, but what is his ability?
17. Which 'hero' has the ability to manipulate geological materials?
18. Where is Matt Parkman when he discovers that he can hear people's thoughts?
19. Which character has the ability to control and manipulate technology?
20. Once neutralised, who erased Sylar's memories?

DIDN'T HE/SHE DO WELL! See how you did with our arbitrary scoring system



16-20

CLAIRE BENNET

Your body regenerates after serious injury. A lot of lives revolve around keeping you safe, and each time you come back better. You have salon-quality hair and kick asses on a daily basis; you are invincible.

11-15

SYLAR

You know how things work and often have the answer, but your need to be the best drives people away. If you focus on helping others rather than murdering people and being a dick, you will go far.

6-10

HIRO NAKAMURA

You are a dreamer, but it takes lots of time and effort to turn your dreams into reality. You tend to jump into situations without thinking them through, but it's always with the best intentions.

0-5

ISAAC MENDEZ

You go through life in a trance, and spend a lot of time cut off from the outside world, getting high and moping over love. You better get your act together, or you'll be the loser who gets killed off in the first season…

ANSWERS: **1.** INTUITIVE APTITUDE **2.** SIMONE DEVEAUX **3.** ARLINGTON UNIVERSITY (VIRGINIA) **4.** THE DEATH OF HIS FATHER, CHANDRA SURESH **5.** GABRIEL GRAY **6.** GEORGE TAKEI **7.** 9TH WONDERS! **8.** COMPUTER PROGRAMMER FOR YAMAGATO INDUSTRIES **9.** TAKEZO KENSEI **10.** HUGGERZ69 **11.** NIKI'S SISTER WHO DIED IN 1987 **12.** POMERANIAN **13.** NOAH BENNET **14.** TO STEAL OTHER PEOPLE'S ABILITIES THROUGH PHYSICAL CONTACT **15.** KIMIKO NAKAMURA (HIRO'S SISTER) **16.** INVISIBILITY **17.** SAMUEL SULLIVAN **18.** AT A CRIME SCENE **19.** MICAH SANDERS **20.** MATT PARKMAN

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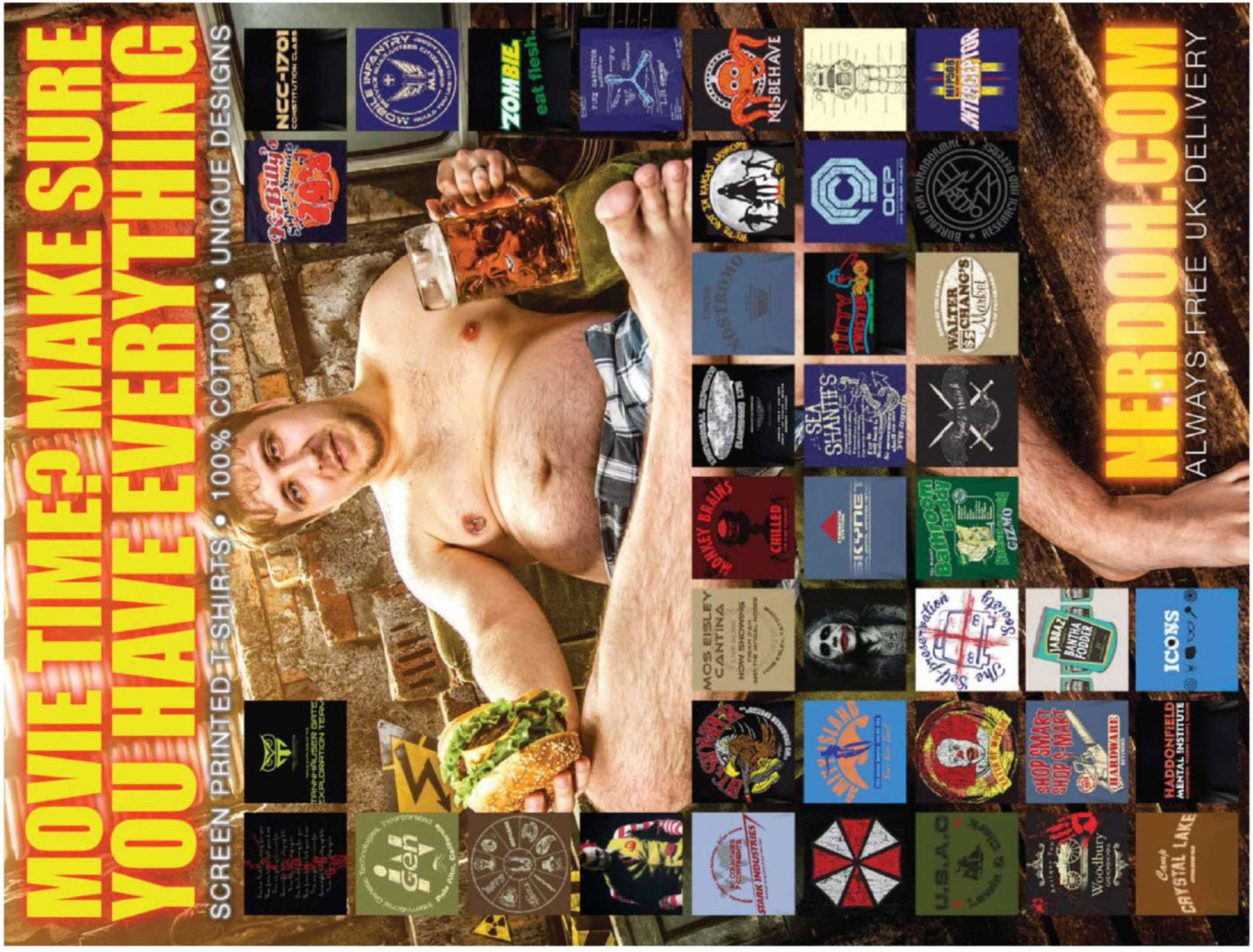
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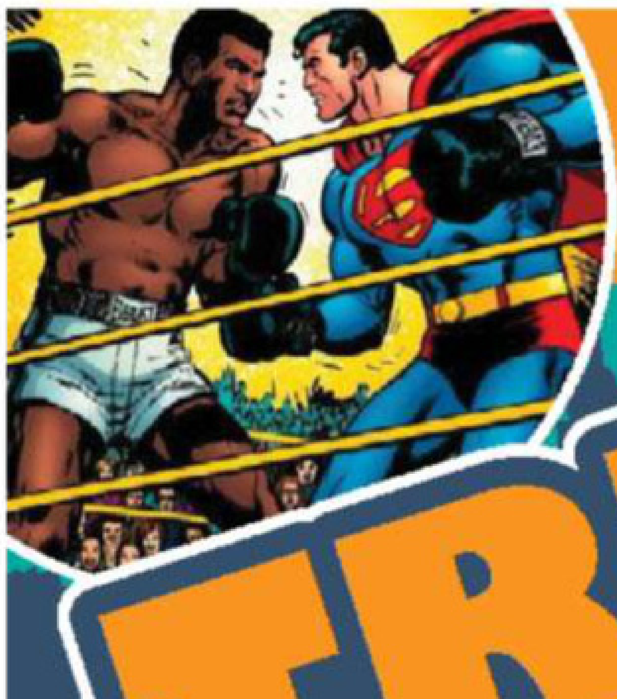


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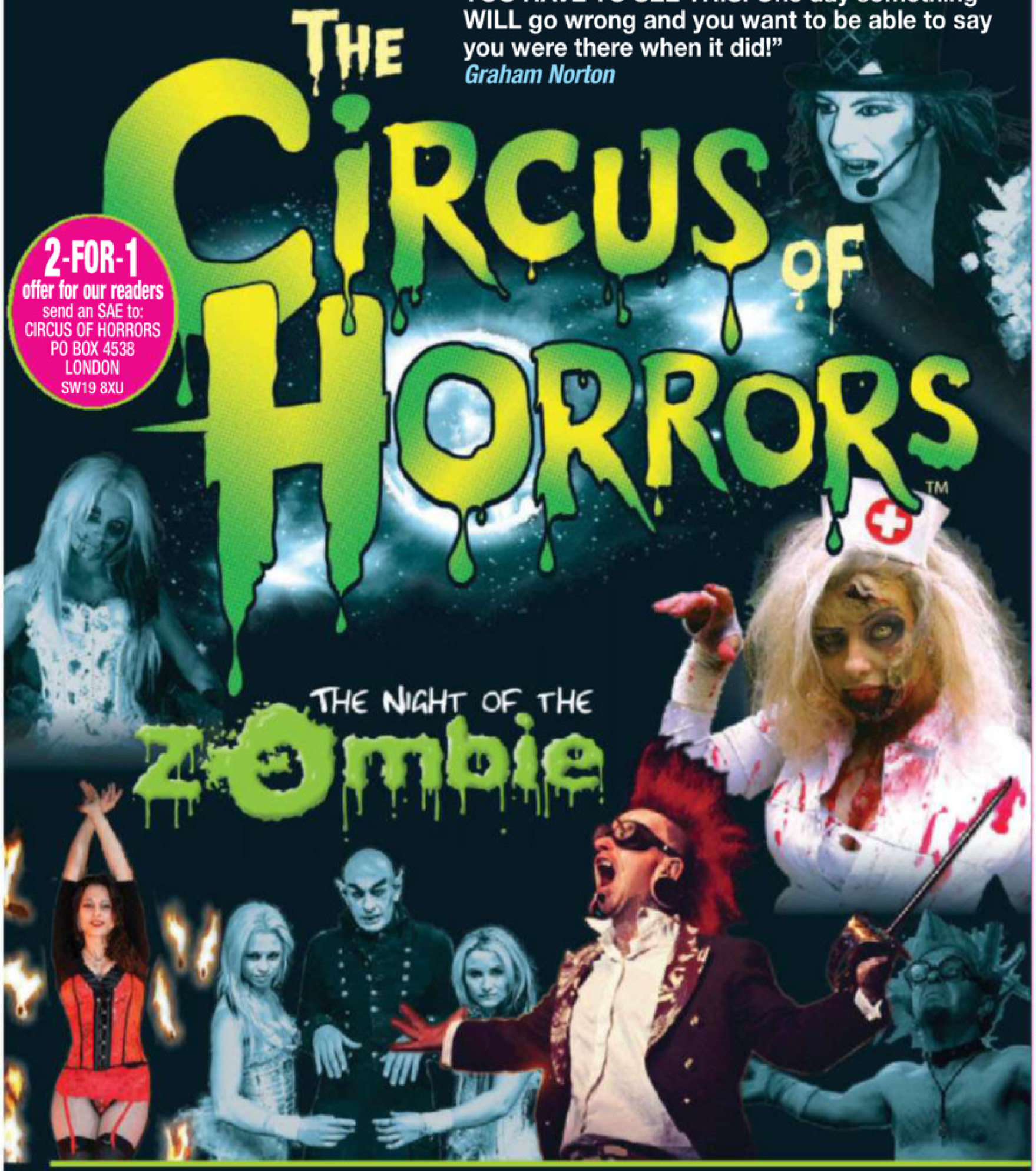
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THE BATTLE FOR MIDDLE-EARTH

We talk to Ian McKellen, Martin Freeman and more as the trilogy comes to an end in The Hobbit: The Battle Of The Five Armies

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☎ +44 (0) 1202 586200
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Magazine team

Editor in Chief James Hoare
james.hoare@imagine-publishing.co.uk
☎ 01202 586284
Production Editor Steve Wright
Senior Designer Marcus Faint
Senior Staff Writer Jonathan Hatfull
Staff Writer Poppy-Jay Palmer
Photographer James Sheppard
Senior Art Editor Andy Downes
Publishing Director Aaron Asadi
Head Of Design Ross Andrews

Contributors

Abigail Chandler, Sarah Dobbs, Erlingur Einarsson, Philippa Grafton, Edward Gross, Matthew Handrahan, Gareth Hughes, Darran Jones, Katherine McLaughlin, Jen Neal, Claire Nicholls, Oliver Pfeiffer, Krystal Sim, Calum Waddell

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Account Manager Anthony Godsell
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Circulation

Head Of Circulation Darren Pearce
☎ 01202 586200

Production

Production Director Jane Hawkins
☎ 01202 586200

Founders

Group Managing Director Damian Butt
Group Finance & Commercial Director Steven Boyd

Printing & Distribution

Wyndeham Heron Ltd, Bentalls Complex, Colchester Road, Heybridge, Maldon, Essex, CM9 4NW ☎ 01621 877 777

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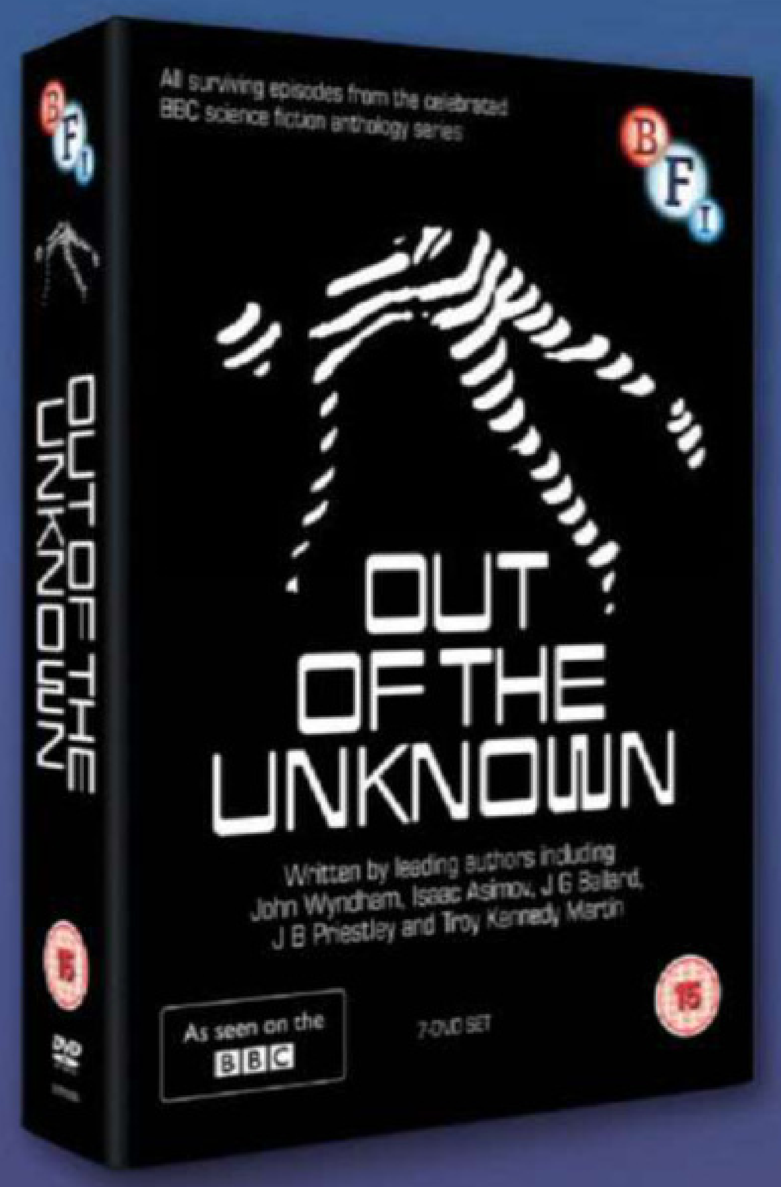


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